

INSTRUCTION BOOK  
FOR THE  
NORTHUMBRIAN  
SMALL-PIPES

BY

J. W. FENWICK

*(Late Member of the Committee of the  
Northumbrian Small-pipes Society)*

SECOND EDITION

REVISED BY

WILLIAM A. COCKS

AND

GILBERT ASKEW, F.S.A. SCOT.

W. W. Woodhead

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THE NORTHUMBRIAN SMALL-PIPES AND BELLOWS  
*(Black kindly lent by Mr. James Robertson, Edinburgh.)*

PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

As a humble performer on, and an admirer of, the Northumberland small-pipes, I have often thought it very remarkable, that having been known from time immemorial in Northumberland, brought to such perfection, and held in such general esteem, no one of late has attempted to publish proper directions for playing this instrument. The instructions which have hitherto appeared are very short, and of little use to either learner or proficient.

For generations this instrument has been held in the highest estimation by the noble house of Percy, who still retain a piper in their service. He wears, on his right arm, a silver crescent, granted as a badge to the family for having taken the Turkish standard in an expedition against the Saracens in the Holy Land. The Duke of Northumberland's piper attends the Court leet and fairs held for the Lord of the Manor, and plays suit and service at Alnwick Castle.

Respecting the origin of the Northumberland small-pipes little can be said with certainty, but it is believed to have existed at a very remote period. The small-pipes of early times were, no doubt, of rude and imperfect manufacture, but great improvements were subsequently made in the construction of them, and certain places became celebrated for the superior instruments which they produced. Of these, Newcastle upon Tyne and the town of North Shields stand highest for the finest small-pipes now in use; and the names of Hall and J. Dunn, of Newcastle, and Robert and James Reid, of North Shields, are handed down to us as makers of the best instruments.

DEDICATED,  
WITH PERMISSION,

TO

MRS. FENWICKE-CLENNELL

OF

HARBOTTLE CASTLE,

WHOSE GENEROSITY MADE POSSIBLE  
THE PUBLICATION OF  
THIS EDITION.

W. A. C.  
G. H. A.

Formerly there were no keys on the chanter, so that the performer could only produce a scale of eight notes, from G to G. About the year 1800, John Peacock, a noted player on the instrument, added the first four keys to the chanter, increasing the scale from D below the stave to A in alto, the key-note being still in G major. Some years after the death of John Peacock, Robert Reid made and improved the instrument with so much ingenuity, that at his death (in 1837, aged fifty-three years) he left it with a chanter of fourteen keys and a double set of drones.

James Reid (died 1874, aged sixty-one years), by his scientific skill, increased the keys to eighteen (very nicely fitted so as to work on a chanter only about eleven inches long), which enables a performer to produce a perfect chromatic scale from A below middle C to B in alto.

Cornelius Stanton, Esq., of Tynemouth, who was an excellent performer on the pipes, a short time before his death, in 1866, induced James Reid to increase the drones to six in number, so as to enable the player to perform in any key, major or minor, with the accompanying harmonies.

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE.

1895.

J. W. FENWICK.

#### PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE instruction book for the Northumbrian small-pipes, by the late Mr. J. W. Fenwick, has been out of print for so many years that no apology is needed for this second edition now offered to the public. Comparatively few copies of the issue of 1896 were printed, and these are so eagerly sought after by collectors that few beginners on the small-pipes can hope to obtain one, and the original purpose of the book is thereby nullified. The revival of interest in the Northumbrian pipes which has taken place in the last few years has brought about an increase in the number of young players. Many old sets of small-pipes have been put into playing order and are once more in use, and new sets have also been made; and the instrument has been taken up with success by enthusiasts of mature years as well as by the younger generation. The editors have frequently been asked if there were no handbook or tutor for the small-pipes, and it is to provide such that the present revised edition has been prepared.

As few alterations as possible have been made in the original text; but the tables showing the fingering and scales of the six, seven, nine and fourteen-keyed chanters have been omitted, and simplified diagrams of the fingering of the plain and seven-keyed chanters included in their stead. There are so few chanters that have more than seven keys that it has not been considered worth while to deal with them other than briefly.

The exercises and airs that were embodied in the original edition have been omitted on the grounds of expense, but the interested public are reminded that the

6 PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

pipe tunes from Bruce and Stokoe's "Northumbrian Minstrelsy," published in book form by the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle, are still in print, and may be obtained from the Warden, The Castle, Newcastle, at the original price of one shilling. In this collection will be found the best of the old airs, and the book is eminently suitable for beginners on the small-pipes.

The history of the instrument has not been touched on, as to do it justice a much larger work would be required.

Finally, the editors wish to thank Mr. Walter S. Corder, the former secretary of the Northumberland Small-pipes Society, for his permission to revise Mr. Fenwick's book.

WILLIAM A. COCKS.  
GILBERT H. ASKEW.

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE,  
November, 1931.



PIPER Jack Armstrong, popular member of the "Northumbrian Barn Dance" team, with accompanist Mrs. Alice Ellis.

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*Drawings by G. H. Askew*



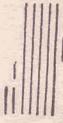
*"To the make of a piper go seven years of his own learning and seven generations before. If it is in, it will out, as the Gaelic old word says; if not, let him take to the net or sword. At the end of his seven years one born to it will stand at the start of knowledge, and leaning a fond ear to the drone, he may have parley with old folks of old affairs."*

[From NEIL MUNRO'S "The Lost Pibroch"]

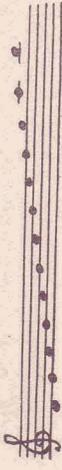
## SYSTEM OF MUSICAL NOTATION

Music is written on five lines  called the staff, and is represented by characters called notes, which are named after the first seven letters of the alphabet: A, B, C, D, E, F and G.

The position of the notes on the staff is denoted by characters called clefs, the music for the small-pipes being written in the G or treble clef. 

The notes above and below the staff are placed on short lines, called ledger lines. 

The following shows the compass of the seven-keyed small-pipes and the position of the notes on the staff:



D E F G A B C D E F G A B

An easy manner of learning, the above is by frequent repetition, in this manner:

Lines and spaces of the staff:

- 1st line E, 2nd line G, 3rd line B, 4th line D, 5th line F.

1st space F, 2nd space A, 3rd space C, 4th space E.

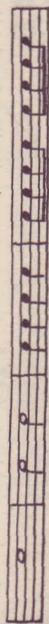
Ledger lines:

- 1st line above, A; 1st space above, G; 2nd space above, B.
- 1st space below, D.

A sign, thus ♯, called a sharp, placed before a note raises it half a tone; and ♭, called a flat, lowers a note half a tone; a natural, thus ♮, restores it to its original position.

There are different kinds of notes, called semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver, semiquaver, demisemiquaver; each kind of note having a corresponding rest. The semibreve being the longest note in ordinary music, it is the regulator of all others, therefore a

semibreve is equal to 2 minims or 4 crotchets

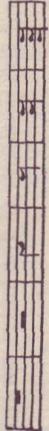


or 16 semiquavers or 32 demisemiquavers.



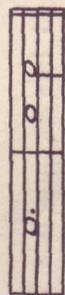
RESTS

Semi-breve	Minim	Crotchet	Quaver	Semi-quaver	Demi-quaver
------------	-------	----------	--------	-------------	-------------



A dot placed after a note makes it half as long again :

A semibreve with a dot is equal to



A minim with a dot is equal to



A crotchet with a dot is equal to



A quaver with a dot is equal to



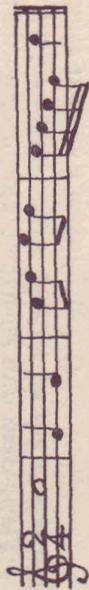
A semi-quaver with a dot is equal to



Music is divided by bars to mark the positions of the accent in a melody. All the bars in a piece of music are of equal value. Sometimes a piece of music commences with an incomplete bar, when it will be found that the last bar also is incomplete; first and last bars put together form a complete bar. A double-bar shows the completion of a musical phrase.

The following are some of the principal kinds of time used in music, the time signature being always placed at the beginning of a piece.

Common time: two crotchets or their value in a bar, first beat accented.



Common time: four crotchets or their value in a bar, first and third beats accented.

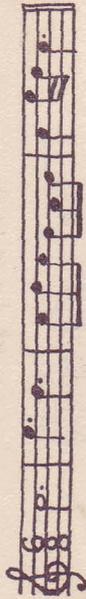


Triple time: three crotchets or their value in a bar, first beat accented.



Compound time: six quavers or their value in a bar,

first and fourth beats accented.



Triple time: three quavers or their value in a bar, first beat accented.



Major and minor scales consist of five tones and two semi-tones. The arrangement for the major scale is as follows:

Scale of G major.



The semi-tones occurring between the 3rd and 4th and the 7th and 8th in both ascending and descending.

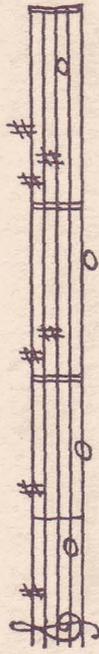
All major scales sound similar to the above but have some other note as a starting point.

The minor scales are a third lower than the relative major, the semi-tones occurring between the 2nd and 3rd and the 7th and 8th in ascending, and the 6th and 5th and the 3rd and 2nd in descending.

Scale of E minor, relative to G major.



The following are the key signatures to the scales which may be played on the seven-keyed small-pipe chanter; many sets, however, are only capable of being played in the keys of G and D.



G Major and E minor. D major. A major.

Those who are fortunate enough to possess a set of pipes having a fourteen or seventeen-keyed chanter and the appropriate number and pattern of drones will find that they are able to employ other scales than those given above; but beginners are recommended, whatever the capabilities of their sets, to use only the scales of G and D until they have a reasonable mastery of the fingering of the chanter. The use of the keys, in fact, should be avoided until the open holes of the chanter can be fingered with confidence.

The principal Italian words used to indicate the pace at which a composition is to be performed are: *Adagio*, very slow; *Andante*, at a moderate pace; *Allegretto*, moderately fast; *Allegro*, lively, merry; *Presto*, very fast.

The following are a few of the signs and words used in music:

 Signifying a pause to be made on that note over which it is placed.

*D.C., Da Capo.* Signifying return and play from the beginning.

*D.S., Dal Segno.* Signifying return and play from last sign, shown thus .

 Signifying repeat section just finished.

**FINE.** End of the composition.

A very common feature of small-pipe music is the introduction of embellishments known as "grace-notes." Skilful performers frequently introduce them, as fancy suggests, with excellent effect, but judgment is required in using them.

The shake is marked by the sign *tr*, an abbreviation of

the word *trillo*, and is performed by a quick and alternate repetition of two notes, the principal note and the note above, and is generally finished with the note below, thus:

Written. Played.



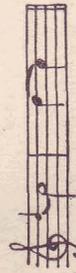
Plain shake.

The short, quick shake called "Mordente" is performed by playing quickly the note over which the sign is written and the note above, returning to the principal note, then passing forward without a turn.

In small-pipe playing, the shake is sometimes made by rapidly opening and closing a finger hole somewhat below that on which the trill is desired to be made. Thus a shake on high G may be performed by trilling the B or middle finger of the lower hand. This kind of shake, although used by many of the best players, is not recommended, as it contravenes one of the most important rules of small-pipe technique, i.e., that only one hole of the chanter must be open at a time.

An *Appoggiatura* is a melodic ornament left to the judgment of the performer; and whether, at his discretion, it be long or short, it must always be taken from the value of the principal note, and must fall exactly in time where the principal note would have occurred.

Written. Played.



Written. Played.



In very quick or staccato passages, these grace-notes are played very short, taking less than half the time of the principal note.

The word *staccato* indicates that the notes are to be played short, distinct, and separated from each other.

Staccato is indicated either by round dots or pointed dashes. Dots placed over notes indicate that they are to be played moderately staccato; when pointed dashes are used, the notes are to be as short and crisp as possible.

The learner should note that the staccato style of playing should not be overdone. Excessive cutting of the notes, though at times lending a meretricious brilliance to a performance, is not in accordance with good small-pipe style.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SMALL-PIPES

THE simplest form of the small-pipes consists of an airtight bag made of leather or macintosh fabric, projecting from which are three stocks. One of the latter is fixed in the small or pointed end of the bag, and its purpose is to carry the chanter and shield the chanter reed. The other two stocks are mounted in the side of the bag, the upper one being the larger, as it has to receive the three, four or more drones in separate holes; the lower stock takes the blow-pipe, which conducts the air from the bellows.

The drones are of different lengths, that giving the highest note being the shortest. Each is divided into two parts by sliding joints, and carries in its lower or stock end a reed for the production of the sound by the action of the wind from the bag. The drones are, in most sets, furnished with stoppers for convenience in tuning, and may also have a revolving "bead" or tuning ring. The latter encircles the drone about two inches from the top, its purpose being to reduce the active length of the drone and enable the latter to be tuned to give a higher note than would otherwise be possible.

The chanter is perforated with eight finger holes, seven

of which are at the front, and one, the uppermost, at the back. (See Fig. 1.) Old sets have rarely more than this, but those of more recent construction will have anything from four to seventeen keys. Each key covers a hole and thus adds an additional note to the compass of the chanter. The keys are kept down on the holes by small springs fixed underneath their tails, and it is a point of importance to see that they fit closely, as otherwise air leaks may occur which will prevent the chanter from giving a true scale. The chanter reed is also to be fixed in as airtight a manner as possible, for the same reason.

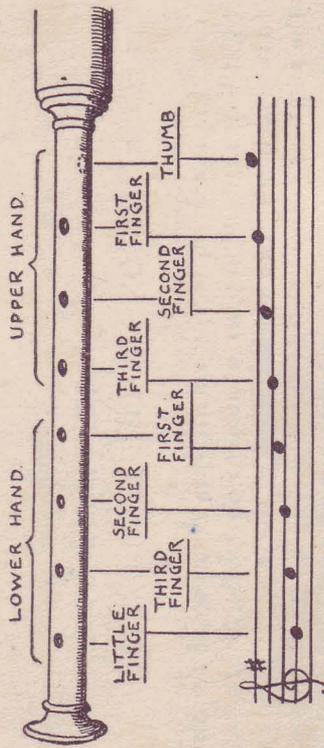


Fig. 1. Fingering and Scale for the Plain Chanter.

The chanter, in all but the very oldest sets, is closed at the lower end, and when the player's fingers are in their proper positions all the holes of the chanter are closed and no note is sounded.

The woods used for the making of chanter and drones are many, but it will be sufficient to enumerate boxwood, ebony, cocus and brazil-wood. The latter has only been utilized within recent years, and most of the older keyed sets have chanters of ebony. Ivory, however, was at one time employed for the construction of both chanters and drones, and is usually associated with silver keys and mounts. The fittings of wooden pipes are generally of brass or nickel.

The keys of the chanter are so placed as to be played by the little finger of the upper and the thumb of the lower

hand, the other digits being employed in stopping the finger holes. All the keys on the left side of any chanter are played with the little finger; the remaining keys, viz., those on the right side and on the back of the chanter, are played with the thumb. (This last sentence applies, of course, to ordinary chanters; players who have left-handed chanters, in which all the keys are transposed, should read "right" for "left" and vice versa.)

In the six-keyed chanter, the three lowest keys give the notes D, E and F sharp below the low G; a small key in the middle of the chanter sounds C sharp, and the two

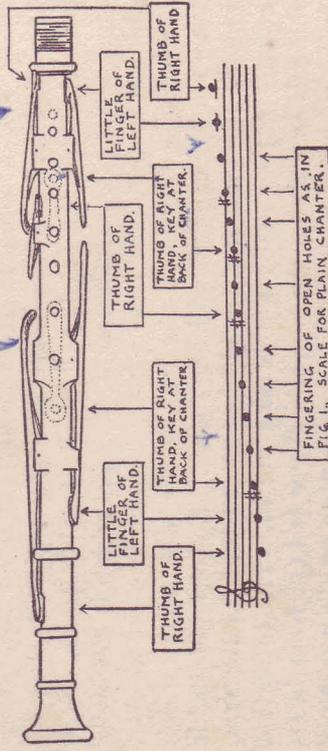


Fig. 2. Fingering and Scale for the Seven-keyed Chanter.

uppermost give the A and B above the upper G. The seven-keyed pattern has in addition to the above another small key somewhat higher than the middle, which gives the note D sharp. (See Fig. 2.) The nine-keyed chanter has all the keys enumerated above and two more giving low and high G sharp, whilst the fourteen-keyed model, rarely seen, gives a complete chromatic scale from low D to high B. The seventeen-keyed chanter, equally uncommon, has three further keys giving the B, C and C sharp below low D.

The foregoing details are included in case the beginner should possess a multi-keyed set and desire to use it; but the seven-keyed pattern has almost become the standard instrument, and, next to the plain keyless chanter, is the best for the purposes of learning.

## FIXING AND WORKING THE BELLOWS

THE first thing to be observed in learning the instrument is the method of attaching it to the player's body, which is as follows. The bellows will have fastened to the back a long leather strap or belt, which should be buckled round the waist so as to bring the bellows under the player's right arm. The small strap or thong on the front of the bellows should then be passed round the right arm just above the elbow and secured in the manner provided for. Old-fashioned bellows may have a thong which has to be twisted round the small end of the outside wood, but a more satisfactory arrangement, and one which is gradually gaining favour, is to have a hook screwed into the front of the bellows slightly to the rear of the inlet valve, which hook readily engages with the thong. A strap and buckle provide the most positive kind of attachment for the arm, but are not so easily got in and out of. The important thing is to see that the player's sleeve is kept from interfering with the inlet valve and so cutting off the supply of air to the bellows.

The pipes should next be taken and connected to the nozzle or outlet of the bellows by means of the blow-pipe, when a few outward and inward motions of the right arm will fill the bag sufficiently to allow it to be placed in position under the left arm. The hands should hold the chanter so that the finger holes are stopped each by the appropriate finger, and as soon as the bag becomes distended the drones will be found to have assumed their proper position, i.e., lying almost horizontally across the player's chest. The student should then lift the little finger of the lower hand, press the bag slightly with the arm, and sound low G. No attempt should be made to use the drones at this juncture, it will suffice if one note only of the chanter is sounded, and the learner should concen-

trate on keeping an equable supply of air in the bag and sustaining a steady note from the chanter.

The winding, or preserving a continuous current of air, is of the utmost importance, as without this the instrument cannot be played in tune. Proper management of the bellows is a thing which can only be attained by practice, and the action of the bellows arm should be steady but tractable. The bag should not be blown up to its utmost capacity, but should be always about three-quarters full, and the action of the arm controlling the bag should be nicely balanced against that working the bellows, so that the re-inflations will have no effect on the sound produced by drones and chanter. With practice, the use of the bellows will become almost automatic and unconscious.

The attitude in playing the instrument may be either sitting or standing, and all unnecessary movements of the head or body should be avoided.

## FINGERING

THERE is no qualification more important to the learner than that of correct fingering, and as it presents considerable difficulty, the lessons of a skilful master would be a great advantage. As a general direction we may observe that the small-pipes are played upon the method called "close-fingering," which allows of only one finger being lifted at a time. The fingers must be pressed down very firmly on the holes in order to produce a good tone; and care should be taken to place the tips of the fingers (not the nails) upon the holes, and not let them lie flat upon them. It should be noted also that the chanter should only be sufficiently firmly held so as to allow of a proper closing of the finger holes, and should not be gripped.

When the student has studied the principles of music, and the method of holding and inflating the instrument, he should proceed to practise the scales. At first it will be better not to use any of the keys there may be on the chanter, but to attempt only the one octave chanter scale, the notes of which are emitted by the finger holes of the chanter; and not until a reasonable amount of confidence has been acquired in the use of the finger holes should the learner begin to play a scale requiring the keys.

Whilst the scales are being mastered, and, indeed, until the pupil can play a tune or two on the chanter, the drones should be shut off by means of their stoppers.

### PRACTISING THE SCALES

THE thumb of the left or upper hand must be placed on the hole at the back of the chanter. The first three fingers of the same hand will cover the uppermost three holes in front, and the four fingers of the right or lower hand will stop the remaining holes in front. The fourth finger of the upper and the thumb of the lower hand, being otherwise unemployed (except when the latter is engaged in supporting the chanter) are used to operate the keys. Care must be taken that the holes are closely stopped, after which the bag should be gently inflated with the bellows. When the bag is about three-quarters full, press gently with the left arm, when the note G may be sounded by lifting the lowest finger off the hole. If a good tone is not produced, make sure that the other holes are all properly stopped and press a little more firmly on the bag. Having achieved a clear sounding G, replace the lowest finger on the hole, and raise the next above, thus sounding A. The other notes are produced by opening the holes in succession, as given in

the scale. The learner should practise all the notes, sounding each clearly and steadily, ascending successively from the lowest to the highest, and descending again, until he is able not only to produce the notes correctly, but to sound any one at sight wherever it may occur.

It cannot be too greatly emphasized that only one hole of the chanter must be open at a time, and the greatest care should be taken in observing this. The learner may find it advantageous sometimes to begin the scale at the highest or thumb-hole note and descend to the lowest: by doing so any faults in the proper stopping of the holes may readily be corrected.

TUNING IS ONE FULL TONE BELOW  
CONCERT PITCH.

### TUNING THE DRONES

WHEN the drones are in tune the shortest produces the note G, which is the note upon the second line in the treble clef, and is therefore in unison with the low G of the chanter. The second drone sounds the note D below the staff, which is the lowest note on the seven-keyed chanter. The third drone sounds G, the octave below the small drone G. Example.

G     D     G

1st or small    2nd    3rd drone

The drones are tuned by lengthening or shortening them at the joints to the required note in the following manner. Sound low G on the chanter and screw out or screw in the upper portion of the small drone until the note

TUNING READ ON EACH DRONE  
RAISES PITCH ONE FULL TONE

is in unison with the chanter, then take a tight hold of the neck of the bag above the chanter stock to prevent the chanter from sounding. The low G or third drone may now be tuned in the same way, by screwing out or in, until it sounds an octave below the small drone. The middle or second drone D, a perfect fifth above the low G drone or a perfect fourth below the small one, may now be adjusted. The one way of tuning holds good in all keys: to tune the middle drone get the key-note and octave first, and then the fifth up from the low key-note. This gives a more exact tuning than attempting to tune the middle drone a fourth below the small or key-note drone.

Four drones are now commonly met with, only three of which, however, are used at a time, and the three sounds produced simultaneously are the key-note, the octave below the key-note, and the dominant between them, or a perfect fifth above the lowest in use. The fourth drone sounds D, the octave below the second drone. This drone is used when playing in the key of D, and it should be adjusted so as to sound an octave below the second drone. The first or small drone should be shut off by means of its stopper, and the third or low G drone shortened until it gives the sound of A, being a fifth above the low D. This arrangement gives a similar drone harmony for the key of D to that provided by the first three drones for the key of G.

If it is desired to play in the key of E minor, the drones should be tuned as follows. Tune the second or D drone to low E on the chanter, then alter the long D drone to sound E an octave below, after which the third or low G drone may be tuned a perfect fifth above it and produce the sound of B.

The pupil should note that the tuning of the drones, although apparently an easy matter, requires a great deal of exactitude, and ample time should be given to this branch of study, as the pipes should never be played with the drones out of tune.

## REED MAKING AND SETTING

By W. A. COCKS

### *General Remarks on Reeds*

Small-pipe reeds are of two varieties, viz., double and single or beating reeds. The former pattern (fig. 3, j) is like that of the oboe in principle and is used in the chanter, whilst the latter (fig. 3, a, b, c) resembles the clarinet reed and is employed to set up the vibrations in the drones. The reeds used in the Northumbrian small-pipes are very delicately made, and the least moisture is most injurious to them. They must never on any account be blown with the mouth, for once they have been damped they are irreparably spoiled. To test a reed during making, air must be sucked through it, not blown through.

All reeds when fitted to the pipes must be perfectly airtight at the point of insertion; a little bees-wax or shoemaker's wax will ensure this. If any wind from the bag has access to the chanter except through the reed there will be false notes and poor tone, whilst the same condition in a drone will cause the reed to stop entirely.

Each reed must be set perfectly straight so that it does not touch the side of the stock. Failure to attend to this will result in all kinds of troubles.

A reed which has become choked with dust, but which is otherwise satisfactory, may be cleaned by blowing petrol through and allowing it to dry.

Reeds once set satisfactorily should never be interfered with. They may go out of condition for want of use, but playing will bring them back to their proper form. Well-made reeds will last almost indefinitely (accidents excepted)

with careful use, and cases are known where a chanter reed has still been in perfect condition after thirty years' playing; drone reeds may last even longer.

On account of the great variations in length and bore found in small pipes, it will be evident that reeds made to suit one set are very seldom correct for any other. It is therefore highly advisable that every piper should be able to make and adjust his own, and the subjoined instructions, combined with practice, should enable anyone to accomplish this. Failures at first are inevitable, but experience will soon show the best sizes and style of reed to suit any particular set of pipes.

Before fitting a set of pipes with reeds, the key pads and drone slide wrappings should be looked over and made airtight where necessary. Poor tone and false notes will result if leaks are left unremedied.

The chanter reed should always be fitted first, and the drone reeds made to speak with the same pressure. As, however, the latter are easier to construct, they have been dealt with first in the following pages. After a few successful drone reeds have been made, the manufacture of chanter reeds may be attempted.

#### *Drone Reeds (also known as Gulls), Fig. 3, a to f*

Materials required: Spanish cane of suitable diameter (about three-sixteenths of an inch); elderberry (bour-tree) twigs of similar diameter, well seasoned; thin sheet brass for metal reeds; waxed hemp thread.

Tools required: a fine triangular file; an old knife with the edge left rough from the grindstone; an old razor or safety-razor blade mounted in a handle; files, pliers, etc., if metal reeds are to be made.

Method: take a piece of cane of suitable length and diameter, or a piece of elderberry wood free from bark, and burn out the pith by means of a hot wire. Close up one end airtight with a drop of sealing-wax unless it is closed naturally by a joint. Lightly nick the skin through about one-quarter of an inch from the closed end with the file,

completing the cut through to the bore of the cane with the razor-blade. Split a tongue back towards the open end from this cut, and wrap three or four turns of waxed thread round at the end of the split, finishing with a half-hitch. This wrapping provides the "tuning string" or "girdle."

The tongue, being the vibrating portion of the reed, must be so adjusted that its frequency is suitable to the drone for which it is intended. It will probably require to be thinned at the root end in order to make it vibrate easily, and for this purpose it may be scraped with the rough-edged knife.

Taper the open end of the reed perfectly circular, wrap a few turns of waxed thread round to fit it in its seating, and try it in the drone.

It should play in tune with the drone slide about one-third drawn out. This does not always apply, however, to drones which have been perforated to sound more than one note at will, i.e., fitted with tuning rings. If the note sounded is too sharp, that is, the tongue vibrates too rapidly, it may be flattened (a) by having the root end of the tongue thinned down, (b) by having the tongue split further back, (c) by placing a drop of wax on the free end of the tongue.

If it is too flat it may be sharpened (a) by shortening the acting part of the tongue by means of the tuning string, drawing it a little towards the free end, (b) by making one or more nicks near the free end of the tongue, thus lightening it, (c) by removing a little of the wax if any has been applied to the tongue.

A drone reed which stops easily may often be cured (a) by warming gently at a candle or match flame and holding the tongue open slightly meanwhile, (b) by inserting a very thin hair in the cut, right down against the tuning string.

Roughness and poor tone are often improved by rolling the reed between the palms of the hands backwards and forwards, afterwards springing the tongue outwards a little.



SEE NOTE ON FIRST END PAPER  
AT BACK OF BOOK

*Metal Reeds*

Reference to the illustrations (fig. 3, c, d, e and f) will make the construction of metal reeds clear. The thickness

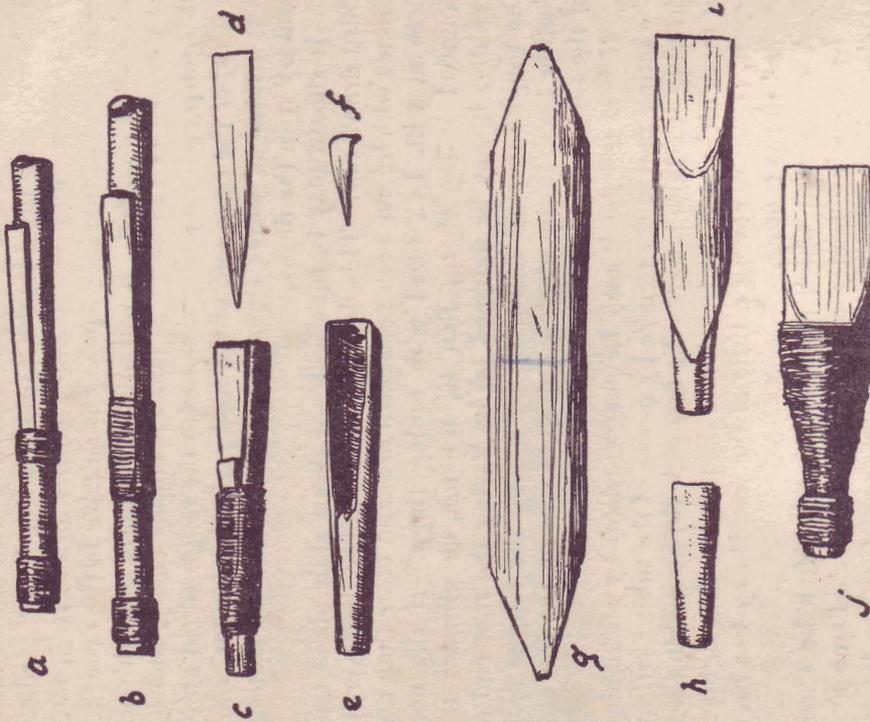


Fig. 3. Construction of Reeds.

of the vibrating tongue must be found by trial, as must also the position of the tuning piece.

The root of the tongue (fig. 3, d) is tightly wrapped to the body (fig. 3, e) of the reed, and the tuning piece (fig. 3, f) is held in place by a separate wrapping. This

enables it to be moved without upsetting the position of the tongue.

The reed is sharpened by reducing the acting length of the tongue (as in a cane reed) and it is here that the adjustable tuning piece is an advantage. The nearer the tuning piece is drawn towards the free end of the tongue the sharper will be the reed; the reverse movement will naturally flatten it.

It often happens that a drone which has an exceptionally small bore, making a cane reed unreliable, can be successfully fitted with a reed of metal; but in other cases metal reeds sound very harsh. It is quite an easy matter to fit a metal tongue to a cane body and a useful reed is often produced in this way (fig. 3, b).

*Chanter Reeds*

Materials required: slips of Spanish cane, which may be procured from most florists in the shape of flower baskets; hemp thread waxed with shoemakers' wax for wrapping; staples or tubes which may be made of tinplate or other thin sheet metal; thick shellac varnish; floral wire or copper electric bell wire.

Tools required: a gouge of suitable curvature to fit that of the cane, and ground with the bevel on the inside; a block of wood grooved to fit the outer curvature of the cane; a block of wood rounded on one edge to fit the inner curvature of the cane; a fine triangular file; an old knife with the edge left rough from the grindstone; an old razor; a tapered piece of steel set in a handle, upon which to hold the metal staple during the making of a reed; a pair of pliers; fine glass-paper.

Method: there are two main methods in use, viz., wet and dry, each having its own slight variations. The wet process is, on the whole, easier to a beginner, as it lessens the risk of splitting the cane, and is therefore to be recommended.

A slip of Spanish cane, free from cracks and irregularities, seven-sixteenth inch wide and three and five-eighth

inches long is taken (fig. 3, g) and laid in the block of wood which has been grooved to accommodate it. With this support, it may be safely gouged out until it is approximately one-sixteenth inch thick down the centre, tapering off to almost nothing at the edges. It is now to be smoothed on the inside, and this is done by laying a piece of fine glass-paper over the rounded edge of the wood block, and sliding the slip to and fro upon it until all gouge marks have been taken out. Now it must be soaked in water for a few minutes and have the ends trimmed to blunt points of about five-eighth inch in length. These points need trimming a little on the inside to fit them closely to the metal staple (fig. 3, h) which is a tube seven-eighth inch in length and about five-thirty-second inch bore at the circular end. The other end, flattened a little to an oval section, lies inside the reed. It may be made of thin sheet metal of almost any kind, even old tin-plate being quite suitable. Some workers use a tapered piece of steel set in a handle, bradawl fashion, upon which to hold the staple during the wrapping and trimming of the reed. It is not essential but may be found convenient.

The slip, now pared, smoothed and pointed, is laid on the glass-papering block, and nicked lightly across the exact centre and *exactly* at right angles with the triangular file or rough-edged knife, and again soaked in water. It is now possible to double it at the nick with very little risk of breakage. When doubled it is fitted to the staple and wrapped with a few wide open turns of hemp thread. The outsides of the points may now be trimmed up smooth and rounded if necessary, after which the whole of the junction between the staple and cane is to be closely and tightly wrapped with waxed hemp thread. The wrapping extends from a little above the shoulders of the cane to three-sixteenth inch from the end of the staple. There must be no open space down the edges between the cane sides; they must fit quite closely to each other. At this stage the reed must be laid away for a day or two until it becomes perfectly dry. This is of the utmost importance, as any

further work upon it will be labour wasted if it is the least damp. After varnishing the wrapping and again allowing to dry, the two sides are separated at the fold by rubbing either side alternately on fine glass-paper, holding the reed at an acute angle. When they are finally separated, a few turns of iron floral wire or two turns of copper bell wire are laid carefully round the reed right against the end of the thread wrapping, and the ends twisted up at one side. This wire serves to control the mouth of the finished reed. The blades or sides of the reed are now to be thinned down gradually and carefully by scraping from wire to point with the rough knife, until the reed will sound a note when air is sucked through it at the staple end. From this stage it must be scraped with the razor, which must be kept very sharp, and a very light pressure used. The reed should now sound easily and have a kind of "crow" in its note. If it lacks this "crow" it will not be very much use. The thinning process and intermittent tests are continued until the reed is judged to be about correct; this judgment only comes by experience, and the great art of reed-making is in knowing when to scrape and when to stop.

The ends of the blades require trimming up square and clean. This is done by one steady pressed cut by a *sharp* razor, the reed being supported meanwhile upon a piece of perfectly smooth, hard wood. The razor must not be rocked in this cutting, but pressed straight through.

The bare end of the staple is now wrapped with enough beeswaxed thread to fit it tightly to the seating in the chanter, and its pitch and tune tried in the pipes. Here again some experience will be found necessary in order to obtain good results, but the following points will assist in the process of fitting.

If the reed is very heavy to blow and is wide open at the mouth, close the latter by nipping the control wire at the centre of each side. If it is close at the mouth and still heavy to blow, the blades are too thick, and the remedy is to thin them, principally at the edges. Supposing the reed to speak at a suitable pressure, but sounding the top notes

flat by the lower ones, it must have a few turns of wrapping removed and be inserted farther into the chanter. The reverse process is used if the top notes are sharp. If the pitch of the whole chanter is too flat, the reed requires to be shortened by cutting a very little (one-sixteenth of an inch) at a time from the end of the blades with the razor. Never in any circumstances should scissors be used for this, as it is courting disaster to employ anything except a very sharp razor. When fitted correctly and in good tune, the extreme corners may be cut off. This lessens the chance of their being caught on anything and split. It also makes the reed a little easier to blow and sometimes it has the effect of sharpening the top notes. It should be remembered that a reed should not be scraped very thin near the control wire, but should be of an evenly graduated thickness from this point to the tip, if a perfect result is to be attained.

The making and fitting of the chanter reed is work requiring patience and gentle handling, and it is best, when one becomes wearied and impatient, to lay the reed aside for a time.

Narrow reeds are sharper in pitch than wide ones, and it often happens that a chanter which has been badly made, having flat upper notes, may be greatly improved by having a very sharp reed fitted. Here again the experience of the piper with his own set is invaluable. There are, however, some chanters in existence which unfortunately cannot be reeded in tune at all; they are badly made and ought to be burnt to avoid giving trouble to the pipers of the future.

The dry method of construction is the same as the foregoing, except that two slips of cane are used, each about one and thirteen-sixteenth inches in length, and they are worked entirely without any soaking; the long slip also may be worked dry if desired.

The best average chanter reed is one and three-quarter inches in length, and seven-sixteenth inch in width.

When a reed has been finally set and judged correct, it

is an advantage to fasten it round at the point of junction with the chanter by means of a little bees-wax, shoemakers' wax, or even paraffin wax, although this last does not adhere so well, and is brittle.

Finally, the chanter reed, set and playing, should not be tampered with, nor taken out to try in another set, but should be preserved as a thing of value—which it is.



RT. Aug 62

**Barn Dance**

HAVING frequently criticised the BBC's neglect of English folk tradition, I welcomed *Barn Dance*. I have seen two of the performances, and am greatly disappointed. The atmosphere, décor, and presentation were 'phony' and contrived, the dances and dancing uninspired, and too much time was devoted to songs deriving from music-hall sources.

The boys were good, but could not compare with the many excellent traditional and club teams, while traditional singers and musicians (e.g. Northumbrian pipe-players) are superior to professional 'commercial' groups.

A great opportunity to present real English song and dance in a worthy manner has been wasted. —*Ivor G. Hull, Linby, Notts.* NS16

**EC North pipe dream?**

IT is good to hear that lovers of the Northumbrian pipes are growing in number for, when all else fails, it is such bodies who best express our feelings of regional unity.

For the resurgence of interest in the Geordie's own "national" instrument we owe a debt of gratitude to the Northumbrian Pipers Society whose fame is reaching all parts of the globe.

It is fitting, too, that their plaintive notes should still echo through Newcastle's historic Black Gate every month.

Just as legend has it that England has ought to fear while the ravens nest on Tower Hill, so do we feel that the Geordie will never lose his characteristic identity while the Northumbrian pipes are heard in the Black Gate.

**Ring Chronicle**

rsday, August 23, 1962

**ROUTINE**

by Vigilant

should be at yesterday's attack on our Civil Defence Corps, for the Corps has long had a long target to write target clear dis-

LIEUT. W. F. the Iyne bur intention with the "Bomb" re further than to he strange and reasoning leading with an avowed of outlawing a tion to believe an further this end acking a movement ted to the saving of

y, we cannot believe Ausfellow citizens so join as to see in the Hon of an efficient opp Defence Corps any arr assurance of our Jagal in the event of a He, but holocaust. rep have never accepted Tenuous affinity

of all by the gales, these people rend homeless by the sto Civil Defence work were seen as guard angels as they set up f kitchens and arran emergency accommo tion.

Nor would the thousand old people who have t food delivered by meals-on-wheels ser operated in many p of the country by C Defence workers th anyone who tried to band the movement.

Fear of nuclear deva tion is one thing. To this as an excuse to le ourselves defenceless the face of lesser disas — whether they be work of man or of nat — is something different.

The work of Civil Defe or any other organisa of this kind, is human rian.

To make it a pawn political ends — unilateral nuclear armament is nothing

**TOO SMALL**

neside Junior Chamber of merce is attracting only the potential membership he area, says the President, F. K. Short, in his annual rt.

The loss is to the individual, he firm and to the com- ity," says Mr. Short. e believes an area the size of eside should have a Chamber t least 200 members. How- the Council has not acted his suggestion that there ld be a recruiting drive. "I e that next year the time for a drive will seem more roprate to them," he adds. he report shows that bership fell during the year 60. The first step was also in towards creating honorary bership for students at g's College. Although a ll number of economics ents now take part in the mber's activities it is felt a permanent contact should established inside the College.

**Watkinson flies in**

ne Minister of Defence, Mr. old Watkinson, has arrived k in London after a two-day to Paris, during which he informal talks with M. smet, the French Minister Armed Forces.

**WANDERING**

THE last link in a chain that has stretched on Newcastle to Penang, alaya, and back again, king in the infamous nang, Japanese prisoner-war camp, was forged nen two Newcastle men et.

nd today, the story of a al, which began life in e time in Singapore and aya has finally returned to city, was unrodded. n 1927, a medalion was sent by the Northumber- d Rifle Association to pper J. H. Dodd, of the pe Electrical Engineers,

**He was arrested**

upper Dodd went to live in ang, Malaya but before war ke out he went to Australia n his wife and two sons.



E.C. 15.4.61



FAMOUS PIPERS were the Cloughs of Newsham, seen at they were 40 years ago. On the right is Tommy Clough, on the left his father Mr. T. Clough, second from the right his father Mr. W. Mr. H. Clough and in the centre, front, his father Mr. W. Clough. In the background is Mr. F. Pickrell, blacksmith and pipe maker. (See "Pipers all.")

IT is good to hear that lovers of the Northumbrian pipes are growing in number for, when all else fails, it is such bodies who best express our feelings of regional unity.

For the resurgence of interest in the Geordie's own "national" instrument we owe a debt of gratitude to the Northumbrian Pipers Society whose fame is reaching all parts of the globe. It is fitting, too, that their plaintive notes should still echo through Newcastle's historic Black Gate every month.

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branched out on his own as a solo comic under the title of "Nut in a Hut."

### BLYTH PANTO

IT WAS then Arrol was spotted by the management of the Theatre Royal, Blyth, who booked him to appear as principal comedian in the pantomime there. That was 14 years ago.

He followed, this by playing a number of bookings for the North-Eastern impresario, Mr. Teddy Hinge.

Now he has really made the top grade. His home is in Brighton where he lives with his wife and five-year-old daughter.

### PIPERS ALL

A FEATURE of the Newcastle Arts Festival is an exhibition of Northumbrian Small Pipes at the Black Gate Museum.

Mrs. F. Dobson, of Wingrove Road, Newcastle, has sent me a photograph of about 40 years ago showing four generations of Northumbrian pipers, the famous Clough family of Newsham, near Blyth.

The photograph of the grandfather was superimposed after his death and the other members of the family shown are Mr. H. Clough, Mr. T. Clough and Mr. T. Clough, Jr., all members of a Newsham mining family and genuine performers of folk music in the true tradition.

In the background stands Mrs. Dobson's uncle, the late Mr. F. Pickrell, of Blyth, who was a maker of pipes.

### STRONG MAN

MR. PICKRELL was a powerful man with the large hands of his calling, that of blacksmith. This heritage came no doubt from one of his forebears, William Carr of Blyth Samson reputed in his time to be the strongest man in the world.

Yet those great hands could fashion delicate work, making the pipes' chanters and even modifying and improving the arrangement of the finely worked brass keys.

This was noted by the late King Edward VII when he examined a set of Mr. Pickrell's pipes at Alnwick Castle and marvelled that the rough hands of a blacksmith could fashion such delicate work.

Thursday, August 23, 1962

## SCRUTINY

by Vigilant

NOBODY should be surprised at yesterday's attack in Morpeth upon our Civil Defence Corps, for the movement has long been a favourite target of our nuclear disarmers

But it is not our intention to discuss the "Bomb" issue here further than to note the strange and devious reasoning leading those with an avowed intent of outlawing a weapon of widespread destruction to believe they can further this end by attacking a movement dedicated to the saving of life.

Certainly, we cannot believe our fellow citizens so naive as to see in the retention of an efficient Civil Defence Corps any false assurance of our survival in the event of a nuclear holocaust.

But we have never accepted this tenuous affinity

of all by the gales, these people rendered homeless by the storm. Civil Defence workers were seen as guards angels as they set up their kitchens and arranged emergency accommodation.

Nor would the thousands of old people who have their food delivered by meals-on-wheels served operated in many parts of the country by Civil Defence workers anyone who tried to band the movement.

Fear of nuclear devastation is one thing. To this as an excuse to let ourselves defenceless the face of lesser disasters — whether they be work of man or of nature — is something different.

The work of Civil Defence or any other organisation of this kind, is humanly.

To make it a pawn of political ends — unilateral nuclear armament is nothing.



COMMITTEE members of seated: J. Bryan, E. You

## TEACH WA - JORD,

By J

chair Activ that bued festi and e May Alt a mo make tant side

RO A plant new Natio Albar The year varie path roses varie ment rest

# They keep alive 'Geordie's' music

ON one Saturday afternoon in each month a strange music fills the spiral staircase and stone rooms of Newcastle's historic Black Gate Museum.

Visitors browsing among the display cases stop, surprised. But this is no ghost from the turbulent days of the Border Wars making its presence felt.

The music is being made by a small group of men — and occasionally a woman — gathered around a table in the upstairs library. They follow a variety of occupations—but they are united in one common aim—to keep alive the music of the Northumbrian pipes, the Geordie's own "national" instrument.

So few people are aware that this old instrument is still played and, thanks to the Northumbrian Pipers Society, is arousing the interest of music lovers the world over.

machines into lathes. They had no patterns to go by, so they copied other people.

"Today, I should think that if it was possible for people to get sets of pipes cheaply they would be much more popular."

## Pumped

The cost of a set of pipes—which unlike their counterparts over the Border, are not blown but pumped—is about £30.

Mr. Charlton is quite sure that if the society had not been formed, the pipes—and the traditional music which goes with them—would have died out.

The only firm to produce the pipes on a commercial basis was the Reed family of North Shields, more than a century ago.

Some members of the society have Reed pipes. They are always ready to play in public, and recently took part in Blaydon Races Week and Norway Week.

Two vice-presidents, Jack Armstrong, piper to the Duke of Northumberland, and Billy Figg, have done a lot to popularise the pipes by their recitals over the radio.

## Enthusiasm

Secretary Mr. Forster Charlton said that two new members—one from Virginia Water, in Surrey—had taken the strength of the society to 60. There was terrific enthusiasm among members.

They even make their own pipes in many cases. "It is the only way of getting them—unless you are lucky enough to pick up an antique set," explained Mr. Charlton. Different people have made them in different ways, and they are far from being uniform. You are lucky to find three sets which play in tune with one another.

Old shepherds used to make them by converting sewing



Committee members of the Northumbrian Pipers Society take a break from practice. Left to right, standing: J. Bryan, E. Young, W. Phillipson. Standing: J. Forster Charlton, secretary, G. Atkinson, R. Greensiff.

EC 23.8.62

# TEACHERS KEEP WATCH ON JORDAN'S MEN

BY JEFFREY SLACK

## Old clothes raise £12 for new floor

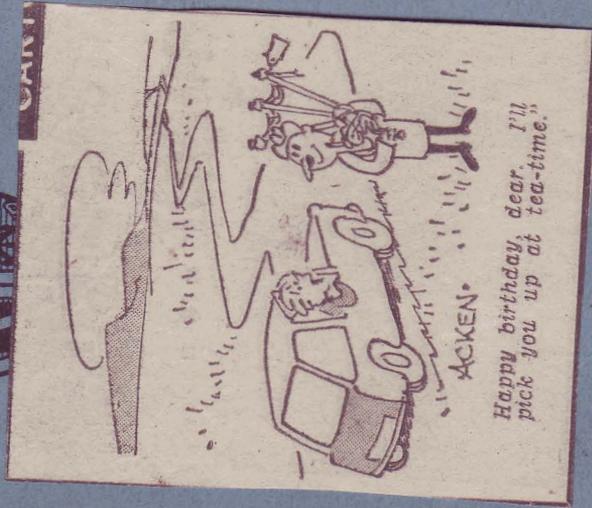
During a recent "woollen drive" organised by the Black-hall Boy Scouts and Girl Guides Parents Committee, old garments were collected and sold for £12.

The money will go towards the cost of a £80 wooden floor recently fitted to the Scout hall.

COONS



"I'll pick you up in a couple of hours"



ACKEN.  
Happy birthday, dear.  
I'll pick you up at tea-time.

\* PAGE 24.

Instead of burning out core  
I and out to do following ops:-

G' - 3  
D' - 32  
G' - 74  
D' - 74  
8.

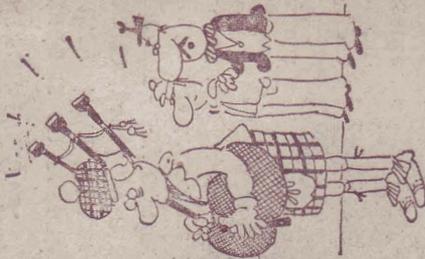
base used from ordinary garden  
canes obtainable from any seedman  
base for blaster needs (Spunk.)  
obtainable from

JAMES ROBERTSON

58 GROVE ST

EDINBURGH

USELESS  
EUSTACE



MADDOCKS.

"They never feel the  
cold because that bag  
is full of whisky!"