

The Seán Reid Society Journal.

Volume 1

March 1999

‘This work will cover many years and will require the help of many dedicated pipers on both sides of the Atlantic, in this generation and in generations to come. On no other instrument has so much affection and reverence been lavished, or so much time and loving toil been devoted. But alas! So many men who were geniuses worked away in solitude and their hard-won knowledge and skill died with them. If we are to succeed this must not be allowed to continue.’

Seán Reid 1968, in a letter to a meeting of pipers which culminated in the formation of Na Píobairí Uilleann to whom we are all eternally grateful.

This journal and the society are respectfully dedicated to the memory of Seán Reid, that greatest patron of the Irish pipes and a real gentleman.

A slow air!



Dan O'Dowd with his Michael Egan set (left) and Seán Reid (right) with his Maurice Coyne playing together at NPU *Tionól*, Falls Hotel, Ennistymon, 1976.

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In1 Introduction.

Ken McLeod

Seán Reid.

Seán Reid was born in Castlefin co Donegal in 1907 but spent most of his life in Ennis co Clare where he was county engineer responsible for water and sewage. Some of his earlier years were spent near Dungannon in co Tyrone. He graduated a B.Sc. in civil engineering from Queen's University Belfast in 1931. Seán was leader of the Tulla *Céili* Band from 1947 until the mid sixties. His interest in traditional music is legendary as was his kindness, generosity and help to many musicians, beginners and masters alike. Seán played with many of the greatest traditional musicians at one time or another, to name a few; Joe Cooley, Paddy Canny, P.J. Hayes, Peter O'Loughlin, Bobby Casey, Martin Talty, Martin Rochford and Willie Clancy. When Johnny Doran lay on his death-bed Seán organised a benefit *céili* at Quilty co Clare for Johnny and his family.¹ When he last visited O'Mealy he found him in unfortunate circumstances and sent him a few bags of coal. He ordered from Leo Rowsome the best set he could make and these are now played by Liam O'Flynn. He was a friend of the famous Brother Gildas who wrote to Seán describing his meetings with Mickey Cumbá back around 1912. A direct link with the old timers, Seán collected pipes around the countryside at a time when there was little interest. Most of them he gave away and often for nothing, providing he saw a keen interest or talent. Once someone criticised a novice piper in his presence, Seán's response was to comment 'All pipers are good, but some are excellent.'² I could go on but I will leave that to someone who knew him longer than I and indeed for what hopefully, will be a feature article in the next issue. There was great sorrow among all who knew him when he passed away in 1978.

Considering the aims of this society there is no greater person after whom it could be named. Rest in peace Seán and thank you.

We are highly indebted to the Reid family for permitting us to name the society in the great man's honour. We would hope to do that memory the justice it so richly deserves, especially now approaching the twenty-first anniversary of his passing.

The Seán Reid Society.

¹ *The Tulla Céili Band* written and published by Chris Keane 1999. Available from the Ennis bookshop – an excellent new title with many good photographs.

² Per Wilbert Garvin.

This society is the result of the wishes of a small number of Uilleann, Union or Irish pipers who have a serious and particular interest in the history, music and technology of the Irish pipes. It is intended to be a living source, which will develop and strengthen our understanding of the instrument, its playing and its history. New knowledge and research will undoubtedly change our understanding and opinions through time and this will be catered for through updates and corrections. At least one issue per year of the journal is proposed. Membership is open to all for an annual subscription of £15 sterling. Articles submitted for publication will only be accepted from members.

To enable an efficient and cost-effective solution to publication it has been decided to make the journal available only on CD ROM. Word and Excel ©³ have been chosen for text and spreadsheets. Adobe Acrobat ©⁴ files are included for use on alternative word processors. The second issue is planned to be a multi-platform CD ROM so that Mac ©⁵ and Unix users can access the files easily. Adobe Acrobat reader can be down-loaded from the internet free of charge. Contrary to popular belief CDs and especially home-recorded CDs, are easily damaged. For your further information the actual recording is on the gold or silver top side, underneath the label. Please treat your CD with great care.

Articles will be numbered sequentially and each will have its own unique directory in order to aid searching and reference by computer later. As substantial associated material can be included easily with this technology these files will be stored in the same directory. Files can be pictures, drawings, charts, and music manuscript. Sound and video clips, when available, will also be included. If illustrations used in the text exist as larger or higher quality versions these too will be available separately in the relevant directory. This method will enable illustrations to be viewed and sound samples to be played while reading the text.

A name index will be updated with each issue of the journal giving period (if known) and where mentioned in the journal. A start has been made to this and it is hoped to continue adding information to all published lists with the help of the recipients.

Although the notes for contributors sets out standards for articles in general, it is accepted that some contributors will be practical rather than academic and that their input is vitally important in achieving our goals. As we will undoubtedly be dealing with folklore and traditions we will accept anything considered to be of value to pipers, pipe

³ 'Word' and 'Excel' are trade names of the Microsoft Corporation.

⁴ Adobe Acrobat is a trade name of Adobe Systems Inc.

⁵ Mac is a trade name of the Apple Computer Corporation.

makers and historians alike. The journal will therefore attempt to be a reasonably standardised set of papers. The style will obviously vary from contributor to contributor and their general format and wishes will be upheld against the suggested standard as being of greater importance. We expect modifications of the guide after this issue when ideas and suggestions for improvement are considered.

Copyright of the content of the journal belongs to the individual contributors or as acknowledged, on an item by item basis, and so must not be copied in whole or in part without written permission. Likewise, individual contributors to this journal have the personal responsibility for anything they submit and the editor will assume that the contributor has obtained any permission necessary.

The founding members of the society are, alphabetically : Ken Bloom, Seán Donnelly, Craig Fischer, Wilbert Garvin, Robbie Hannan, John Hughes, Ken McLeod, Pat Mitchell, Anne Moore, Jimmy O'Brien Moran, Barry O'Neill, Mark Walstrom, and Geoff Wooff.

The governors of the society at the outset are Ken McLeod, who is acting chairman, publisher, editor and treasurer. Wilbert Garvin is acting secretary and will be graphics, layout and art editor for the next issue. Robbie Hannan and Jimmy O'Brien Moran will be the music editors and Sean Donnelly historical editor for volume two. Craig Fischer of Australia is co-ordinator for Asia Pacific and Mark Walstrom of the USA for the Americas.

It is a condition of supply that recipients of introductory free copies do not permit this journal or any part of it to be copied to any third party without prior permission. It may be viewed by anyone however, providing the viewing is on the recipients computer.

The persons and institutions to whom copies of the first issue will be supplied are: NPU, IPC, ITMA, UFTM, UCL, Hugh Shields TCD, The Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum, Muiris Ó Rócháin, Eric Montbel, Bill Ochs, Tom Munnelly, Máire Ní Ghráda, Keith Sanger, Graham Wells, Jackie Small and The Armagh Pipers Club. It is hoped to get a better level of communication with other bellows pipers around the world. There is much information to share.

All correspondence and requests for help should be addressed in the first instance to the present editor : Ken McLeod, 50 Rowantree Road, Dromore, co Down, BT25 1NN, N. Ireland.

A feedback column will feature in forth-coming issues. This will carry any additional information received, corrections and comment. Lists will be re-published as new information emerges. To reference a page in correspondence use the volume number, then the article number (centre top) followed by the page number, (top right) e.g. 1.In1.5 is this page.

The journal was produced using Word 97 SR-1™, Excel 97 SR-1™⁶ and Adobe Acrobat V3™.⁷

The society reserves the right to change the terms and conditions of supply, at any time.

⁶ 'Word' and 'Excel' are trademarks of the Microsoft Corporation.

⁷ Adobe Acrobat is a registered trade name of Adobe Systems Inc.

Constitution.

The Seán Reid Society is a society whose members share a common interest in the history, music and technology of the Irish bellows-blown bagpipes. It is intended to be a living source, which will increase our understanding of the instrument, its playing, music, development and history. It was agreed among the founding members that much needs to be done on the more academic side of Irish piping matters.

It is the society's intent that the expertise held by the old master-makers and exponents of the instrument which was either lost or never before studied, analysed and published, will form the major part of the work. We will try to learn to understand how and why the master-makers of the 18th and 19th centuries were able to achieve instruments of a quality which we are still only coming to terms with today. The origins of the instrument, its development, the technology utilised, the players and the music played, will be researched and published for the benefit of present and future students and researchers.

The society will be a non-profit making registered charity.

The main bank account will be held in N. Ireland; others may be opened in other regions or countries as required. Three signatories will be appointed for the bank mandate, any two of which can withdraw funds.

The society intends that when sufficient funds are available, beyond the costs of the production and circulation of the annual journal, scholarships and research grants will be awarded to individual members whose case is judged appropriate and acceptable by the governors of the society.

Proper books of accounts will be kept and an auditor appointed.

An annual general meeting will decide officers for the following year. This meeting will utilise the Internet and all members will have the right to vote. An agenda will be supplied well in advance.

Rules.

The society is open to anyone proposed and seconded by members or whose application is judged acceptable by the governors.

The annual membership subscription is presently £15 Sterling.

The subscription fee will be waived for one year, at the discretion of the board, for acceptable contributions to the journal.

Editorial responsibility will rest with the editor and sub-editors.
Sub-editors will be appointed as and when necessary.
Co-ordinators will be appointed in various regions as required. These will be responsible for passing on information about the society to those who enquire and will take care of membership issues.

Notes for Contributors. [N.B. Superseded by new guidelines, Nov. 2008.]

General.

First and foremost, please try to emulate the style and standards used in this issue.

Documents should be typewritten on one side only with one inch margins all around.

Pages should not be numbered.

Documents, e-mails, attachments or floppy disks supplied should be supplied in Microsoft 'Word' with simple formatting, or as text files. Spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel⁸ or Lotus123.⁹

Pictures should be original, good copies or on PC disk in a standard format such as jpg or tif. Tif is preferred.

Sound samples can be standard analogue recordings on cassette tape, on CD-ROM or wav files.

Video samples should be in AVI or MOV format, standard VHS or digital video tape in PAL standard are perfectly acceptable.

Original drawings should be separated on a page by page basis and one side only of each page used.

It would be helpful if subscribers could attach a separate list of names with dates, which appear in their article or paper.

Document Format.

The standard font used in future issues will be Times New Roman 12pt.

Text will be justified left in future issues to facilitate speed-readers.

Names of books and periodicals will be in italics.

Words in a language other than English will be italicised but not personal names.

Quoted text will be indented and quoted verbatim. The use of (sic) in quoted text is not obligatory.

Footnotes are by the page using standard numbers.

Footnotes are to be in Times New Roman 10pt.

Lists are to be in 8 pt or 10pt.

Titles, sub-titles and sub-sub-titles are Bold 14pt, 13pt and 12pt respectively.

Author's name is standard text size following the title on a new line.

Each paper title is preceded with a unique number, which will be allocated by the editor.

Tune titles will be in parenthesis unless in a list in which case normal text will be used.

Instrument names will use a capital e.g. Highland pipes or Union pipes.

Copyright etc.

⁸ 'Word' 'Excel' and 'Microsoft' are registered trade marks of the Microsoft Corporation.

⁹ Lotus123 is a trademark of Lotus Inc.

All books, journals, papers etc. quoted or used must be credited in footnotes.

All contributors are bound to make certain they have permission from copyright holders as necessary.

Copyright of each paper rests with the contributor or as credited.

However, this journal assumes the right to re-use material submitted.

If anything appearing in the journal is reproduced elsewhere it is a pre-condition that the journal be credited in the standard way.

News.

Garrett Barry.

At 2am on December 31st 1899 'Blind' Garrett Barry was buried in the churchyard at Inagh, co. Clare. His coffin was rested on the low wall nearby as the grave was dug by lamplight. Nearby there is a little church hall with a plaque naming it as the Garrett Barry Memorial Hall (Barry2.tif). The grave however was forgotten and has only recently been re-discovered. This situation was pointed out to me recently by Tom Munnely, song collector, who lives near Miltown Malbay. Tom took me to see the site of Garrett's grave and suggested that we do something about a memorial. The local community needs to be involved, as does Na Píobairí Uilleann and perhaps the IPC, if they so wish. Tom will look after the local end of things and I have promised to help where I can. I don't consider the cost of such a memorial as being hard to find but am conscious of the fact that most Irish pipers around the world would like be associated with this project. I suggest you ask your piper's club how to contribute, should you wish to involved.

The gravesite is shown below. Note the low wall mentioned in the text.



William Kennedy.

A very interesting set of pipes has recently turned up in Belfast made by William Kennedy (1768-1834) the blind pipe maker of Banbridge, co Down and Tandragee, co Armagh. It has two regulators, baritone and bass, which is very unusual. The bass drone is also unusual in that it does not have a double bend but turns around like a trombone slide and comes right back up again. I would guess that because of the bass regulator we could probably date it later in his career i.e. early 19th century. This set will be detailed in description and drawings in a forthcoming issue. The previous owner was Tom Ward of Belfast, who got them from Leo Rowsome. They are now in the possession of Tom's widow who does not wish to sell but does want to see them being played. They are to be restored to playing order in the near future but are in reasonably good condition as they stand. Someone, perhaps Leo Rowsome, had lengthened the chanter and regulators, presumably to

bring them nearer to concert pitch. They would appear to have been sharp from D like many earlier sets. No irreversible damage has been done, as far as I have noted to date without a much closer examination. Tom Clarke made the find.

An overall view of the set.



Mickey 'Cumbá' O'Sullivan Memorial.



Barry O'Neill sent the above picture of the memorial to Mickey Cumbá at Castlecove, co Kerry. It originated from a Mr Chris Humphreys at the tourist office there. Mr Humphreys went on to say that ;

'There is a local Historian who lives in Cork if that makes sense, and some years ago he found some old music from Mickey Cumbá which he gave to a man in the village who plays the pipes. However he can't find the music ! Anyway I shall keep trying, there is a pub in Caherdaniel called after him, "The Blind Piper" where some information is supposed to be.'

See Cumba2a and 2b in the directory for two further illustrations later supplied by Mr Humphreys. I assume that it came from the pub mentioned and that it is a T-shirt.

Coullie – Pipe Maker.

Mr Ged Gardiner of London sent me these pictures and a request for more information on this maker. Ged owns a NSP set made by Thomas Coullie and there are two examples of his work at Morpeth, shown in the photographs. One is a Lowland set and the other obviously a fine looking Union pipe chanter from front and back. Apparently W.A.Cocks reckoned Coullie was a Newcastle maker but there is nothing conclusive about him. This is news to me, perhaps someone can throw some light on this maker. Thanks to Ged Gardiner and Morpeth Museum for the pictures.



Acknowledgement.

I would particularly like to thank Wilbert Garvin for his assistance with the introduction.

End.