

2.12 The National Museum of Ireland: Union pipes collection.

Ken McLeod

After many years of separation, the collection of Union pipes has been re-united at Collins Barracks, National Museum of Ireland. The collection is under the control of the Department of Art and Industry and is available for inspection, under strict control.

On May 9th James O'Brien Moran, Geoff Wooff and myself made our first visit to the museum and had a most wondrous day examining these classics under the supervision of the assistant curator, Ms Sandra McElroy. It was most gratifying to find the interest Ms McElroy had in the collection and all we had to say about the instruments. I was particularly happy to be able to put together a complete Musette de Cour from bits and pieces, which we found in various boxes and bags. It was disappointing however to find that one chanter fitted to a lovely B set – possibly Colgan – was in fact relatively modern junk made from 'brush-shaft' and without keys. There was no explanation of as to how this had come about. The hairs of the wood were so obvious in the bore and the flaking black paint plus no keys on the chanter made an attempted deceit rather obvious.

The good news is that much of the classic makers' work seems to be original and undamaged. Two Coyne, one Egan, the great Joe McDonnell Kenna set, and others, seem to have untouched chanter bores although there is a small step in the Kenna which needs further investigation.

One day is certainly not enough to examine the collection and in the three days in all spent so far looking at the pipes; we have only completed a brief survey. The third day was spent with the assistance of Wilbert Garvin.

One lovely discovery, by Jimmy, was a card on reed making through the various stages and was made by Pat Ward. This was possibly commissioned by the museum but could also have been made for reed-making lectures at the Dublin piper's club.

The set with 'O'Farrell's Union Pipes' engraved on the stock ferrule may be hard to accept as the work of O'Farrell. The set has three regulators and is early so could of course be a very much later piece of work than the style we imagine when we look at his tutor.

The so-called 'Taylor' set, according to David Quinn is not the work of the Taylor brothers at all and David suggests Anderson as the maker. In the case of Taylor instruments, we will bow to his judgement.

Copyright restrictions make it difficult to consider publishing pictures. The list in this directory covers all that we saw on these three visits, apart from three orphan double chanters and some other bits and pieces. The pipes, which are on display, were not available to us, plus others, which are either in the vaults at Kildare Street or are as yet

unpacked. Status is noted in the attached list. See the individual files in this directory for descriptions. We will return when the missing sets are found.

List of Union and Pastoral pipes at the National Museum of Ireland.

Number	Maker
1888-474	Ryan
1889-242	Unknown (Pastoral)
1890-942	Coyne chanter
1893-484	Coyne
1899-59	Egan, Dublin
1905-1	Unknown
1906-280	Reid
1908-161	Timothy Kenna
1910-600	Unknown
1912-347	Unknown
1914-538	Kenna / McDermott
1914-539	Hussey
1929-100	Maurice Coyne
1938-60	Maloney Brothers
1939-10	Doogan
1939-72	Unknown
1943-109	Kenna
1944-147	Michael Egan
1947-48	Unknown
1947-87	MacGregor
1950-1	George Potter
1972-7	Anderson
1994-1	O'Donnell
1995-115	Colgan ?