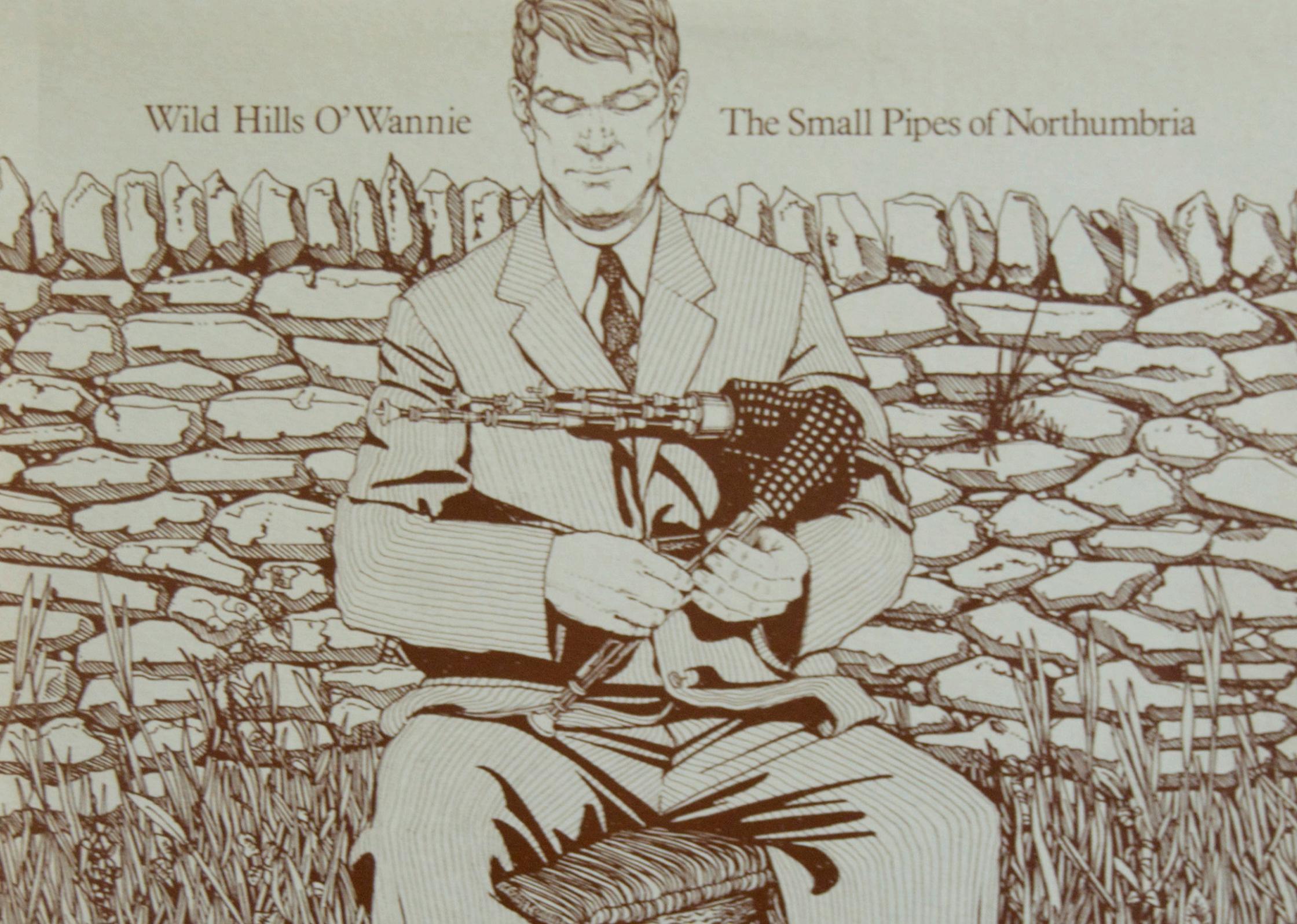


Wild Hills O'Wannie

The Small Pipes of Northumbria



# WILD HILLS O' WANNIE THE SMALL PIPES OF NORTHUMBRIA

Dance tunes & Airs by Outstanding Pipers

**1 The Morpeth Rant**

BILLY PIGG

**2 Skye Crofters/ The Swallow's Tail**

BILLY PIGG

**3 Sir Sidney Smith's March**

TOMMY BRECKONS

**4 The Barrington Hornpipe (T Todd)**

GEORGE ATKINSON

**5 Blow the Wind Southerly**

DIANA BLACKETT-ORD

**6 Lovat Scouts/Roxburgh Castle/Bonny North Tyne  
(W Ballantyne)/Alston Flower Show**

JOE HUTTON

**7 The Navy on the Line/ The Friendly Visit/Remember  
Me/Biddy the Bold Wife/Lamb Skinet/De 'il amang the  
Tailors**

GEORGE ATKINSON

**8 Londonderry Hornpipe/Boys of the Blue Hills/Corn  
Rigs/Harvest Home**

DIANA BLACKETT-ORD

**9 The Blackthorn Stick/Biddy the Bold Wife**

JOE HUTTON

**10 The Holey Ha'penny**

BILLY PIGG

**11 The Humours of Bandon/Saddle the Pony**

JOE HUTTON

**12 Noble Squire Dacre**

COLIN CAISLEY & FORSTER CHARLTON (duet)

**13 Rowley Burn Hornpipe (F Charlton)**

JOE HUTTON

**14 The Wild Hills o' Wannie**

BILLY PIGG

**15 Westering Home**

DIANA BLACKETT-ORD

**16 The Midlothian Pipe Band/Charlie Hunter**

JOE HUTTON

**17 The Lark in the Clear Air**

BILLY PIGG

**18 Fenwick o' Bywell**

TOMMY BRECKONS

**19 Variations on 'Oh dear, what can the matter be'  
(T Clough)**

GEORGE ATKINSON

**20 The Gypsy's Lullaby (W Pigg)/ The Hawk (J Hill)/  
Memories (T Clough)/Coates Hall (W Pigg)**

BILLY PIGG

**21 Salmon Tails up the Water/ The Herd on the Hill/  
Sweet Hesleyside**

COLIN CAISLEY & FORSTER CHARLTON (duet)



George Atkinson  
Diana Blackett-Ord  
Tommy Breckons  
Colin Caisley  
Forster Charlton  
Joe Hutton  
Billy Pigg

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co-operation of the Northumbrian Pipers' Society  
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Front cover drawing by Ken Lees

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### THE INSTRUMENT

The Northumbrian Small Pipes have at various times been called seductive, wild, plaintive, lyrical, exciting, and sophisticated. These apparently contradictory descriptions result from the unusual versatility of the instrument as well as from differences in the tonal quality of individual sets of pipes. Thus, it is possible for each performer to develop his own characteristic style of playing and if you listen carefully to this record you will soon become able to identify the player from the sound of the first few notes of a tune.

If you wish to know more about this instrument in relation to other European types of Bagpipe, you should read *Bagpipes* by Anthony Baines (Oxford, Pitt Rivers Museum, 1960). Here, it is sufficient to say that it reached its present state of development comparatively recently, about 100 years ago, that it can be played in various keys and that, unlike most bagpipes, it can produce either staccato or legato effects at the will of the performer.

The development of the instrument has produced a corresponding expansion in the repertoire available to its players and the 40 or so tunes on this record are a fair sample of current trends. Basically, there are four main types of tune, though these to some extent overlap. There are the older 'typical' pipe tunes, like *Noble Squire Dacre*, which have survived from the days of the simple keyless melody pipe, or chanter: there are the 'airs with variations' still used in competitions as tests of skill: there is a liberal sprinkling of well known folk dance tunes and slow airs of various nationalities, and there are tunes and sets of variations composed within living memory by folk musicians of the area.

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### THE PLAYERS

Most of the players represented here have a rural rather than an urban background. George Atkinson is of farming stock and now lives in Ebchester, Co. Durham. His pipes were made of partridge wood by the late WA Cocks of Ryton, and George has won many cups and medals in competitions. Miss Diana Blackett-Ord, also a winner of many competitions, manages the family farm near Whitfield, Northumberland, and her pipes were made by Jack Armstrong, until recently Piper to the Duke of Northumberland, who also taught her to play. She likes to play in the key of D major.

Tom Breckons has a farm at Bellingham, Northumberland. At the age of 17 he learned to play the Scottish Highland bagpipes, on which he is an excellent performer. He took up the small pipes in 1947 largely because an 'expert' told him that it was impossible to learn to play both instruments properly. Within two years he had won the 'open' class competition for small pipes at Bellingham Show. An accident to his hand which immobilised his thumb almost put an end to his piping career, but through perseverance he is now playing both instruments again. His pipes were made by Fred Picknell and Tom Clough, working together, and he was originally taught by the late George Armstrong of Hexham.

Colin Caisley's pipes are also of Clough/Picknell manufacture and he, too, was taught by George Armstrong. He teamed-up with Forster Charlton about 1960 after which these two played duets together for a number of years. Forster Charlton's pipes were made by Cocks except for the chanter which Forster made himself. He entered the piping scene fairly late in life, taught himself to play and often regrets that he did not learn to play as a child.

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Joe Hutton was born at Coanwood, near Haltwhistle, in 1923, and is now a shepherd among the Cheviot Hills, just on the English side of the border. Joe has played the small pipes from the age of 13 and is another of George Armstrong's pupils. His pipes, of ivory and silver, have a 17-keyed chanter, and were made about 1870 by Mr Errington Thompson of Sewingshields, a farm on the Roman Wall. Joe has been a regular competition winner from a very early age.

With the death of Billy Pigg in November 1968, the piping community lost one of its best-loved and highly esteemed members. Billy was no ordinary player. His originality of style and phrasing had, at times, the mark of genius, and we are indeed lucky to be able to include examples of his playing on this record. His influence on the younger generation of pipers is remarkable and it is he above all others whom they seek to emulate.

Billy was born in 1902 and first learned to play the small pipes at the age of 18. He won so many piping competitions that he was finally barred from entering in order to give the other players a chance. For many years he judged the Northumbrian Pipers' Society competitions in Newcastle and also those at the Northumbrian Gathering in Alnwick. He does not appear to have taken formal lessons on the pipes but he learned a great deal from the playing of the best of the older generation of pipers, like Dick Mowatt and Tom Clough and his father, Henry.

Billy's pipes were made by Reid of North Shields. He often played on a 17-keyed chanter, but his favourite was a small 7-keyed ebony chanter on which he was able to perform with great dexterity. He became quite excited when he played and, in some subtle way, transmitted his emotions to his audience by way of his music. He was a prolific composer of pipe tunes, and many of those reproduced here are of his own composition.

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### THE PIPERS' SOCIETY

The idea of this record was originally conceived by the Northumbrian Pipers' Society which exists to spread knowledge of, and interest in, the Northumbrian Bagpipes. If, after hearing these recordings, you wish to know more about the instrument, or about the Society, write to its Secretary, at the moment (1973) Mrs Ross, 5 Dene Bank, Monkseaton, Whitley Bay. In case of difficulty the address of the Secretary at any given time can be got from the information desk, Newcastle upon Tyne City Library, New Bridge Street, Newcastle upon Tyne 1.

*Forster Charlton*

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