





Pat Mitchell Uilleann Pipes

First published by Topic 1976
Recorded by Roly Brown at Coolock, Co. Dublin in August
1975 and January, February & April 1976
Produced by Roly Brown and Tony Engle
Notes by Roly Brown from material supplied by Pat Mitchell
Sleeve design by Tony Engle
Photographs by Hugh MacConville

- 1 Reels: **Garrett Barry's/The Virginia**
- 2 March: **Sullivan's March**
- 3 Reel: **Concertina Reel**
- 4 Air: **Lord Mayo**
- 5 Reel: **College Groves**
- 6 Double Jigs: **Port Liadroma/Sean Tiobraid Arann**
- 7 Reel: **Star of Munster**
- 8 Single Jig and Double Jig: **Frieze Breeches**
- 9 Descriptive Piece: **Máirseáil Alasdruim**
- 10 Single Jig: **Willie's Single**
- 11 Hornpipe and Reels: **Kildare Hornpipe/Castle Kelly/Sailor's Bonnet**
- 12 Marching tune: **Eagle's Whistle**
- 13 Double Jig: **The Maiden That Jigged it in Style**
- 14 Air: **An Draighnean Donn**
- 15 Double Jig: **The Old Hag in the Kiln**
- 16 Reel: **Galtee Reel**
- 17 Double Jigs: **The Lark in the Morning**
- 18 Reels: **Patsy Tuohey's Reel/The Green Fields of Rossbeigh**
- 19 Piece: **Nóvra Criona**
- 20 Reel: **Flogging Reel**

The several strands that make up Pat Mitchell's piping are none of them especially unusual, but cumulatively interesting in the way they reveal how Pat's music has evolved without what has always been held to be the massive benefit of an immediate environment in which traditional music is alive and esteemed. Pat, like many other people who might be classed as urban, twentieth century - some would say, disinherited - has gone looking for his music, and it's important to document his case for an understanding of how such a person fares, and for some insight into the state of traditional music in Ireland today.

There seems not to have been much music in Pat's family save that Dinny Delaney (c. 1836 -1919), a famous piper from Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, was a distant relation. In fact, Pat's initial interest was roused by hearing snatches of patriotic songs and by listening to the Clancy brothers (and we should be grateful that so many people have come to traditional music through their charisma). The next steps were, seemingly, as unco-ordinated: a visit to the Mullingar fleadh of 1963, one of the best of those annual events organised by Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann; an acquaintance with the music of the late Sean O'Riada, got from the radio, the somewhat curious offshoot of this being a lasting interest in the bodhran; and a flirtatious with the whistle.

Then, through a friend, Brian Gallaher - himself a fine, though reticent piper - Pat was introduced to Leo Rowsome, and to the Fiddlers' Club of Church Street, Dublin, ever a seedbed of music. Here he met Finbar Furey, himself already playing pipes under the tutelage of Tommy Moore. It was then that Pat began to gravitate towards the pipes, and on his twenty-first birthday Pat got a present of a bag and chanter from his parents.

Pat now began to come under the influence of the leading pipers of the day. He took lessons from Leo Rowsome, watched Seamus Ennis on television, acquired a 78 of Willie Clancy playing *The Old Bush Reel* and *The*

Ravelled Hank of Yarn. He met Dan O'Dowd and Matt Kiernan, both still active in piping and in pipe-making, and from them Pat learned various piping techniques including ways to play tight triplets. Then his wife, Brid, gave him a present of Breandan Breathnach's *Ceol Rince na hEireann*, a valuable and extremely usable compilation of instrumental tunes; and Breandan himself gave encouragement through the example of his own playing, and in lending Pat material which included tapes of rare Edison phonograph cylinders, some dating from 1898, and some featuring the playing of his distant relative Dinny Delaney.

In 1966 Pat visited Miltown Malbay for the first time and immediately came under the spell of Willie Clancy, an extraordinarily lovable man aside from his music as many will testify. This friendship was maintained until Willie's death in 1973 and, indeed, Pat has just finished transcribing a number of Willie's tunes for publication in book form. About the same time that Pat encountered Willie Clancy, he also met Seamus Ennis.

Through meeting pipers, Pat eventually became involved in the setting up of Na Piobaire Uilleann in 1968 and the fruits are apparent in the growth of piping and pipe-making generally, and in the emergence of some of the best pipers of this generation. Above all, though, for his own progress, he was able to draw on the knowledge of so many giants - help freely given, it might be added - which itself was gained through the players of half-a-century ago, and yet again, through them, from the almost legendary players of the last century. The line, Garrett Barry-Gilbert Clancy-Willie Clancy, is one example of this continuity, as may be seen in some of the tunes on this record. Given the vital ingredient of determination a chart of Pat's progress becomes clear.

His style is an interesting one. We normally distinguish two techniques in piping which are to do with methods of fingering. In the first we describe as tight or close piping the way in which the holes on the chanter are stopped by the

fingers, and only those fingers raised which are necessary to produce a particular note. In the second the fingers are held off the chanter and pressed down only when required for a particular note. This second technique leads to a tone quality which is characteristically termed loose or open.

Pat began by adopting tight piping simply because that is what he first heard - Finbar Furey, for example, producing a sound the effect of which was, as Pat puts it, like 'pistol-shots' (perhaps more unkindly referred to as 'pippitty-pippitty-pop'); and later Breandan Breathnach playing in the strong style of John Potts. Indeed, open piping is a development mainly of this century, especially in the east of Ireland, and almost unknown, on the other hand, in the north. Seamus Ennis has referred to Brother Gildas, a Kerryman who became headmaster of a school in Belfast, as one of the tightest pipers he knew of.

There is no doubt that the tight technique leads to great precision and control, though the vividly staccato effect is not an easy sound to become accustomed to. In fact, over two or three years, Pat has changed to judiciously blending both tight and open playing. This is how those pipers he has come most to rely on played and for an example we might take Willie Clancy (perhaps nearest to Pat's heart) on *The Minstrel* from Clare on Topic Records. Thus we can see how Pat has drawn on developments inorganised piping during the last decade, as well as pipers, tunes and techniques that have appealed to him. Indeed this gives us something like a map of piping in Ireland, and to some extent we become aware of just how much we owe to that handful of the very best players who, because of their dedication and influence, have given such a healthy look to piping in this day. Finally, it's worthy of note that the body of Pat's pipes was made by Willie Rowsome, Leo's father, and is reputed to have belonged to Dinny Delaney, whilst the chanter is from Matt Kiernan.

As to the tunes themselves there are a number of unusual ones, some quite old, and most with distinctive settings that demonstrate how solidly Pat has placed himself in the line of the best pipers and yet has contrived to give tunes a stamp of his own. We begin with **Garrett Barry's Reel** and **The Virginia Reel**, both from Willie Clancy who got them from his father, Gilbert who, in turn, got them from Garrett Barry, the blind piper from Inagh, a few miles distant to Miltown Malbay. The first tune is, in fact, a version of one commonly called Tim Moloney (Tim O Maoldomhnaigh, No. 88 in Breathnach's *Ceol Rince na hEireann*). Both are published in transcription from Willie's playing in *Ceol*, vol. 2, No. 3

Sullivan's March is a tune Pat got himself from the fiddle playing of a Mrs Murphy of Glencollins, Co. Kerry. It was originally a warpipe tune first published as far back as 1663 under the title, Montroses March.

The Concertina Reel is again from Willie Clancy who had no name for it but said that it was popular with concertina players around Miltown in his day.

Lord Mayo comes from a cylinder made in the USA prior to 1910 by John McFadden (fiddle) and Police Sgt. James Early (pipes), (two of Francis O'Neill's best informants), who played it in the style peculiar to the northern half of Ireland.

O'Neill has a published version of **College Groves** (No. 485 in '1001 Tunes'), though Pat got his version from Seamus Ennis. Pat's style here is much influenced by the playing of Tommy Kearney of Waterford.

Port Liadroma and **Sean Tiobraid Arann** are two versions of the one tune, the first, Leitrim Jig, (*Ceol Rince*, No. 12) a popular tune in Dublin and the second, Old Tipperary, (*Ceol*

Rince No. 16) a Munster version from Willie Clancy.

Father Richard Henebry made a cylinder of the next tune, **The Star of Munster** (No. 495 in O'Neill's '1001 Tunes') from the lilting of a woman whose name isn't recorded.

The Frieze Breeches is a popular tune to which the song, Cunnla, has become attached; but these are two uncommon versions, the first in single jig form, the second a highly ornamented Garrett Barry version via Gilbert and Willie Clancy.

Track 9 is a rather unique piece called **Máirseáil Alasdruim** which, to some extent, is a work of recreation by Pat, though the bulk of the whole piece comes from the playing of Michael 'Chúmbá' O'Sullivan, a Kerry piper who made a cylinder for the Feis Ceoil Committee in 1903. (Willie Clancy declared that if he had heard 'Chúmbá' playing in his own youth he would have spent the rest of his life trying to play like him.) This version was originally a piece describing the battle of Cnoc na nDos (Knocknanuss) in 1647. Pat plays an introductory march, still played as a jig in Co. Clare, three short laments on the death of one of the Irish leaders, Alasdruim, and finally a jig said to have been danced by Alasdruim's wife as soon as she had ascertained that he was dead. There is a published version and full description in *Ceol*, vol. 3, Nos. 2 and 3, 1969, and a version of Willie Clancy's in *Ceol*, vol. 2 No. 3.

Pat starts track 10 with a tune whose name is forgotten but referred to so often as **Willie's Single** that the name has stuck. The somewhat stately pace of this tune is interesting. This is the way Garrett Barry played it, entirely unlike the fast speed at which most single jigs are played today. This kind of tune and treatment may very well have been the nearest in style to the original music of the quadrille from

which present-day sets evolved during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Patsy Tuohey (1865-1923) one of the most gifted of a generation of pipers which included Johnny Doran, James Early and Dinny Delaney is the source of the **Kildare Hornpipe** which contains a notable feature in the way the sequence of notes A-F#, A-G', A-F# is played in the second part. The usual piping technique to achieve contrast between the octaves and to accentuate the high notes is to 'pop' - momentarily lift the chanter from the knee - on E', G', F# Pat, however, adopts Tuohey's technique when instead of popping he simply plays each A in a very staccato fashion. The same technique is used in an uncommon version of **Castle Kelly**, (*Ceol* Rince, No. 108) a tune from the playing of Jim Brophy, a piper from Ballyfermot, Dublin. And in **The Sailor's Bonnet** (*Ceol* Rince, No. 157) another of Tuohey's techniques is used, a staccato triplet A, C, F# - Pat suggests that it must be an aural equivalent to an optical illusion, impossible to perceive that A and C remain in the first octave (always assuming that they are played tightly enough).

The Eagle's Whistle which Pat got from Seamus Ennis is said to have been a marching tune of the O'Donovan clan of Hy Fidhgheirte, a district to the west of the River Maigue in Co. Limerick. It was first published in Joyce's *Ancient Irish Music* (1873); though Father Henebry referred to it in *A Handbook of Irish Music* (1928) as prehistoric!

Pat got **The Maiden That Jigged It In Style** from Willie Clancy and the second tune, for which he has no name, from a record made by Tom Ennis, who was a member of Police Capt. Francis O'Neill's Chicago Music Club in the early part of this century.

An Draighnean Donn (The Brown Thorn) is an instrumental version of one of the most popular Connemara *sean-nos* (decorated lyrical song) airs.

The Old Hag In The Kiln is from a Feis Ceoil cylinder of Dinny Delaney.

The Galtee Reel was originally learned from Felix Doran but has become mixed up with a version from Willie Clancy.

The first version of **The Lark In The Morning** is again from Willie who got it from his mother's concertina playing.

The second version is the more common one, learned from Seamus Ennis.

Patsy Tuohey's Reel (see *Ceol Rince*, No. 178) came from Breandan Breathnach's playing. The source of **The Green Fields of Rossbeigh** (*Ceol Rince*, No. 181) is not specific.

In the old Munster manuscripts tunes were divided into those that should be played in the Piece Way and those played in the Jig Way. Nóra Criona, from Willie, is slowed down and highly ornamented in the distinctive Piece Way.

Finally, Pat plays **The Flogging Reel**, a sort of composite version from Willie Clancy, Jim Brophy and Patsy Tuohey.

Digital remaster ©2013 Topic Records Ltd.
©2013 Topic Records Ltd.
The copyright in this sound recording
and digital artwork is owned by Topic Records Ltd.
All rights reserved.

