

The Sutherland Manuscript

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Several manuscripts have emerged to shed new light on how our instrument developed during the eighteenth century. Previously we had Geoghegan's tutor from 1746 and then O'Farrell from the early 1800s: that gap is now covered by manuscripts from about 1765 and 1785. These new sources give us snapshots of how the repertoire developed for the two-octave chanter from its inception to the time of the 'classic' makers, and also how music moved back and forth between the Irish, Scots and Northumbrian traditions during the period. There are many lively tunes, ranging from early versions of today's classics to genres such as minuets that are now out of fashion. The technical range is impressive: there are lots of fast and flashy variations, and many tunes use the whole of the second octave. Now that modern players are pushing the boundaries of 'trad', these manuscripts may give a new bridge from the past to the future. They also give us interesting insights into history, technique and reed-making.

The hunt unfolded during 2005. At the William Kennedy festival, Hugh Cheape described the MacKie manuscript, acquired by the National Museum of Scotland along with a pastoral set from about 1820. Hugh's discovery prompted me to trawl through the eighteenth century music at the National Library of Scotland, where I discovered another manuscript of pastoral music in the Advocates' collection, dating to maybe 1765. The Advocates' manuscript is now online [1] with a historical article [2] describing what these two manuscripts tell us about pastoral piping technique (on which more below).

Jack Latone – a hornpipe

Suth.p34no61



Figure 1

The next question was whether we could find any more 'lost' pastoral repertoire. A web search led me to the American piper Chas Fowler, who suggested 'Music for the Bagpipe' by John Sutherland. By December 2005 I found it at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow. It is indeed pastoral pipe music, about midway on the evolutionary path from the Advocates' repertoire to MacKie's. The latest date in the manuscript is 1785. A copy is being made for the NPU library; meanwhile I have put a selection of the tunes online.

The Sutherland manuscript is written on 262 pages of 215 x 140mm, a convenient size to fit in a pipe case. The pages were bound into a book in 1933; before that they seem to have been a series of notebooks. They are mostly in the same handwriting, though several pages appear to have been written by others (some of them by the writers of the Advocates' manuscript). Presumably Sutherland collected most of the tunes but occasionally got other musicians to write pieces down for him. There is an index, and three fingering charts. 'The Scale for the Highland Pipes' shows not today's nine notes but 11 – there are two second-octave notes with pinched thumbholes. There are also major and chromatic scales for 'The Irish Pipes' that are very similar to the pastoral scales found in Geoghegan's tutor and in the Advocates' manuscript.

Caper Fay

Suth.p139

Figure 2

Eighteenth-century pipes

Three hundred years ago, pipe chanters were effectively shawms, capable of a few second-octave notes – how many depended on the instrument, on the reed and on the player's skill. Such pipes are still played in several European countries. The French developed the shawm into the oboe during the late seventeenth century, narrowing the bore and refining the reed to obtain dependable second-octave performance. The narrowbore oboe arrived in London in about 1730, and the straight-top oboe by 1740. In 1746 Geoghegan's tutor for 'The Pastoral or New Bagpipe' was on sale in London [3], and the instrument he describes is accepted as the ancestor of today's Irish pipes [4].

The pastoral chanter is essentially a baroque oboe. Its main difference from the instruments we play today is a foot joint that extends the chanter to a bell end; this makes the six-finger note sound D instead of ghost D, while the seven-finger note becomes C natural instead of D (with some modern chanters, you can get close to this by using a roll

of paper to extend the bore a few inches). The pastoral chanter's first octave can play the nine-note repertoire of the highland chanter. However, the redesigned reed and bore make a full second octave available, and a nearly chromatic scale can be obtained by cross-fingering. Instruments were often pitched in E flat.



Figure 3

Sometime during the later eighteenth century, pipers found that by removing the foot joint of some chanters and playing on the knee, they could obtain better dynamics. For example, a reproduction made by Jon Swayne of a Robertson pastoral chanter in Ken McLeod's collection plays almost like a modern flat chanter when the foot joint is removed; it even has a hard D, although the low notes are rather quiet. Geoff Wooff has written about how the early chanters from James Kenna (from about the 1760s) were like pastoral chanters, with a quiet tone and an E flat pitch, while in time his instruments became louder and the pitch moved down to in C [5]. The foot joint was forgotten: its remnant today is the tenon cut around the foot of the modern uilleann chanter. But this change took some time. Pastoral sets were made in Scotland until the 1830s; in the 1850s, we hear of 'long' and 'short' chanters in Ireland; and Pastoral chanters are reported in both Scotland and Ireland until about World War 1.

The new chanters (both long and short) spread through both Ireland and Scotland in the 18th century, with makers in Dublin, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Newcastle competing and copying each others' ideas. Tunes and musicians also passed back and forth. The new instrument's popularity peaked in Edinburgh in the third quarter of the 18th century, and the Highland Society in London had both pastoral and highland pipers playing at its dinners from about 1780-1820. By about 1780 Dublin had become a centre too.

The reason Edinburgh led Dublin was simple enough. Edinburgh was a boom town after 1746; the Enlightenment was in full swing, and thinkers like David Hume and Adam Smith were challenging the old order. Everyone believed in progress, and wanted to put the wars of religion behind them. By the early 1770s its music scene rivalled Salzburg or Vienna. Folk music prospered as well as classical; dancing moved indoors, people wanted instruments to play it, and bellows pipes competed with fiddles imported from Italy. Dublin was also growing vigorously, and the union pipe became fashionable among its middle classes from about 1780-1830. Competition between makers in Dublin,

Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Newcastle seems to have driven innovation. By the 1820s the bellows pipes played by Scots musicians like Robert Millar and Donald MacDonald were union pipes incorporating the innovations of Dublin makers like the Kennas.

The Music

If John Sutherland played a single instrument, it was a pastoral set with a dismountable foot joint and a single 6-key regulator. He has two tunes using low C, two with regulator accompaniment marked, and quite a few marked for rests, staccato or clipping. He has about 380 tunes in total, depending on how you count fragments and duplications, so this article is only a first appreciation. His music lies on the evolutionary path from the Advocates' manuscript to O'Farrell, and shares tunes with both of them.

Here are a few samples. Jacky Latin (fig.1) has certainly been round the block: it was composed near Dublin about 1720, appears with variations in Dixon's border pipe tune manuscript in 1733, acquired more variations from Tom Clough in Blythe in the 1860s, was popularised by Kathryn Tickell over the last 20 years, and is now being spread in Ireland again by Jimmy O'Brien-Moran. Sutherland's version appears to predate Dixon. He also has a lot of jigs, from early versions of classics such as 'Merrily Kys'd the Quaker' (p18 no 34) to four of Walker Jackson's compositions, and a number of Irish reels too. However, most of the reels in the manuscript are Scots, such as 'Caper Fay', a fiddle reel first published in 1768 and which later became 'Rakish Paddy' (fig. 2).

Frisky

Suth.p69no134



Figure 4

The second part of 'Caper Fay' can be hard work on a modern concert D set – one might play dfaf bfaf instead – though it's easier on a pastoral chanter as the 'back D' is a second-octave note. This brings us to an interesting feature of the 18th century music, in that vigorous use is made of the top end of the second octave. See for example 'The Lilley', fig. 3, and 'Frisky', fig.4. There are many more.

The reader may occasionally blink at the descriptions of dance music. Sutherland marks the reel 'Jack Latone' as a hornpipe, as he does the jig 'Donal Magrenes' (p40 no73). The 'King of Denmark's Jigg' (p16 no29) is actually a reel, while a slip jig on p84 is called

simply 'Quickstep'. Maybe Sutherland is classifying tunes by how people danced to them as much as by time signature. In any case, tunes of the period were generally less regular than nowadays, with extra half-sections, extra bars and so on being par for the course.

Northumbrian pipers will also find plenty here. In addition to Jacky Latin, there is an early version of 'Lasses Pisses Brandy' called 'Lick the Ladle Sandie' (p15 no 27), and there are many other tunes with Northumbrian-style divisions and variations. There is a 3/2 hornpipe ('Stoney Batter' – p24 no45), although it's written in 6/8. The most impressive variation set may be a 22-part version of the reel 'The Major' (p87-8); there is also a version of Paddy O'Rafferty with 13 parts.

Humours of Dublin

Suth.p160




Figure 5

Overall, the most striking thing about the Sutherland manuscript for the modern piper may be the confident use of the top half of the second octave. Many tunes, and variations on known tunes, become very bright and jolly; the late eighteenth century was, after all, a bright and confident era. The style continued into the nineteenth century, as we can see from O'Farrell and indeed from the makers: the Kennas advertised that their sets had the latest innovations and would play more notes than their competitors'.

Towards the end of his manuscript, Sutherland also has a number of fast and flashy variation sets – the virtuoso pieces of the day. It will be interesting to see whether some of them come back into circulation.

Conclusions

During the past few decades, many musicians have become interested in recovering the playing technique and timbre of early instruments. Pipers have started to follow suit; pipemakers report a shift in demand from concert D sets to flat instruments. The manuscripts we now have enable us to push this process back from the nineteenth century into the eighteenth, and to assess the musical capabilities of instruments that used to be thought of only as museum relics. The interaction between Irish, Scots, English and Italian music in the eighteenth century is fascinating, and we don't have many sources. That is one reason the new manuscripts are important.

I also used to wonder why Kenna chanters from the 1820s have six or seven keys, including keys for E flat, high D and third-octave E. The Sutherland manuscript answers that question, and others too. A lot of research remains to be done, though, from classifying the tunes to learning what we can about old reedmaking styles.

Light and Airy

Suth.p255



Figure 6

As for the big picture, students of folk music often use an evolutionary model – tunes arise by variation and selection over time. But the analogy may go further. Biological evolution is nowadays thought to involve long periods of little change, punctuated by episodes of very fast development of new forms. The late eighteenth century was just such a period for the Irish, Scots and Northumbrian musical traditions: economic growth, social upheavals, new instruments, cheaper transport and a large number of amateur players all drove change in music. Today is no different. Looking back to what happened last time can be fun; and the old manuscripts contain a lot of good tunes.

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References

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- [2] RJ Anderson, 'The Pastoral Repertoire, Rediscovered', *Common Stock*, v 20 no 2 (Dec 2005) pp 24-30
- [3] J Geoghegan, 'The Compleat Tutor For the Pastoral or New Bagpipe', London (1746)
- [4] W Garvin, 'The Compleat Tutor For the Pastoral or New Bagpipe', *An Piobaire* v 2 no 14 pp 5-6; no 15 pp 5-6; no 16 pp 2-3 (1982-3)
- [5] G Wooff, 'Chanter design & construction methods of the classic makers', *Sean Reid Society Journal* v 2 no 4 (Mar 2002)

NB: References [1-3] can be found online at www.piob.info, as can a selection of tunes from the Sutherland manuscript.