

## **2.14 A century of pipemaking, 1770-1870: new light on the Kennas and the Coynes.**

Seán Donnelly

The now standard account of Kenna and Coyne, the famous Irish pipemakers, appears in Francis O'Neill, *Irish minstrels and musicians* (Chicago, 1913), pp 156–7. There had been an 'elder' and a 'younger' Kenna, probably father and son. The elder, Timothy, originally a maker of spinning wheels, worked between 1768 and 1794 in Mullingar, co. Westmeath, subsequently moving to Dublin where he had his workshop at no. 1 Essex Quay. O'Neill identified him as the unnamed pipemaker, originally a wheelwright, who is reported in 1807 to have previously built an organ with six stops for the local Roman Catholic chapel in Mullingar, and to have also completed a pianoforte. Kenna was without peer as a maker until the advent of Michael Egan in the early 1840s. Of the younger maker, 'Thomas', all O'Neill heard was that he succeeded his father on Essex Quay, where he kept up the family reputation throughout the first quarter of the nineteenth century; and that he was a dandy in dress and highly-secretive – as were most craftsmen of that time and much later.

Though brief, O'Neill's account is correct, or very nearly so, in many details; but he did make (or repeat) one serious error: 'Timothy', not 'Thomas', was the younger Kenna; in fact, whether the latter existed is at least doubtful, a point to be discussed below. Arguably Timothy Kenna was the great pipemaker of the early nineteenth century – perhaps one of the most important innovators in the development of the Irish pipes – and he was the maker Michael Egan eclipsed. This misidentification has meant that sophisticated instruments Timothy made (and possibly developed) from c. 1800 to c. 1830 have been predated by several decades.<sup>1</sup> Since these pipes were usually stamped 'Dublin', this implied that the maker had been working in the city by the 1770s and, naturally, everybody wanted their Kenna set to be as old as possible.

THE ELDER KENNA: BALLINACARGY AND MULLINGAR, 1770-c.1800

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of such predating, see W.H. Grattan Flood, *The story of the bagpipe* (London, 1911), p. 154.

An advertisement in *Pue's Occurrences* (Dublin), 1 December 1770, is the only contemporary notice so far discovered of the elder Kenna:

James Keena, Pipe Maker, who for several years supplied the Gentlemen of Connaught and Munster with Pipes, Chanters, German Flutes, etc. takes this Method of letting his Friends and the Public know that he now lives at Balnacargy, within 5 Miles of Mullingar on the high Road leading to Longford, where he carries on Said business in an extensive manner and hopes that his Assiduity and care, the newest fashions now in Taste, as also several Inventions discovered by the said Keena, will merit the continuing Custom of his friends and the Public in General.

Nov. 27, 1770.<sup>2</sup>

Though 'Keena' is the Westmeath pronunciation of the makers' surname, the younger maker stamped 'Kenna' on his pipes, while his father is not known to have stamped his name on the instruments he made. Both forms of the surname occur in the catholic parish-registers of Mullingar, which begin in the 1740s, and 'Keena' may well have been a local surname that was assimilated to the more widely known '(Mac)Kenna' – a common phenomenon.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Frank Carroll Papers, Dept. of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin, 2. No copy of the original newspaper is available in Dublin or in the British Library, London. The Carroll Papers contain hundreds, if not thousands, of items O'Carroll transcribed from eighteenth-century newspapers on an eclectic range of subjects in which he was interested. In the case of the advertisement here and several other musical items in the papers, Carroll may have been copying from a pre-existing scrapbook, as the original newspapers are not now available.

<sup>3</sup> For the surname, see Edward MacLysaght, *Irish families: their names, arms and origins* ((Dublin, 1957), p. 197; idem., *More Irish surnames* (Dublin and Galway, 1960; rev. ed., Dublin, 1972), p. 265; Patrick Woulfe, *Sloinnte Gaedhil is Gall* (complete ed., Dublin, 1923), pp 100, 331, 416, 462.

The advertisement implies that James Kenna was already making musical instruments in the 1760s, and the specific mention of the German flute, a very popular gentleman's instrument, indicates that he was not working in isolation from the wider world of musical-instrument making. It comes as a surprise to find that he had previously worked in Munster and Connacht – in a journeyman phase of his career? – before setting up in what has always been presumed to have been his native province, Leinster.<sup>4</sup> It is also puzzling that Kenna should have chosen to set up in a place like Ballinacargy, instead of an important town such as Mullingar. Subsequently the business did move into the town of Mullingar itself, but if it was James who transferred it, he has left no trace. No 'James Keena/Kenna' is recorded as dying down to 1796 in the catholic parish registers – though a 'James Keenay' did die in May 1779. This surname could have been a slip for 'Keena', but it could equally well be an error for 'Kenoy', a name still found in cos. Westmeath and Roscommon.<sup>5</sup>

Kenna speaks of 'pipes', without qualifying the instrument as 'Irish', 'union', or anything else. References from the 1720s and 30s in Ireland, though stating or implying that a bellows-blown instrument was in question, also call it merely '(bag)pipes'.<sup>6</sup> Apart from one doubtful instance in 1732,<sup>7</sup> the adjective 'Irish' is not

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<sup>4</sup> Kenna could have previously based himself where he could draw his clientele from both provinces mentioned. Limerick would have been one such spot, and perhaps 'Mr Laurence Kenna, dancing master' who died in that city during March 1770 was a relation (H.F. Morris, 'Finn's Leinster Journal 1770: births, marriages, deaths', *The Irish Genealogist* viii (1992-3), 60).

<sup>5</sup> Surnames like Keenan, Keevan, Kearns, Keane, Kinan and Kenan, are also common in these registers, and it is often very difficult to decide which is in question.

<sup>6</sup> For these references, see Seán Donnelly, 'A Wexford gentleman piper: "Famous Larry Grogan" (1701-28/9)', *Journal of the Wexford Historical Society* xvi (1996-7), 48, 56.

<sup>7</sup> W.H. Grattan Flood, *A history of Irish music* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1906), p. 255.

applied in print to the instrument or its players before the 1750s and 60s.<sup>8</sup> The term ‘Irish organ (pipes)’ is first found in the 1770s, though ‘organ’ had previously been used of other domestic bagpipes.<sup>9</sup> ‘Union’ first appears in 1791, and while almost invariably referring to the Irish pipes, it was used at least once of the Northumbrian small-pipes.<sup>10</sup> ‘Uilleann’, suggested in the late eighteenth century, only became the accepted term for the pipes under the influence of the Gaelic Revival during the early twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

Little is known about pipemakers contemporary with James Kenna. The musical-instrument makers in Dublin during the mid-eighteenth century did not include any who specifically advertised that they made pipes.<sup>12</sup> But by the 1760s the mysterious Egan was making finely-crafted, tiny instruments, often completely of ivory, in Dublin.

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<sup>8</sup> For early examples of the terms ‘Irish piper’ and ‘Irish pipes’, see Esther K. Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock Alley* (Princeton, 1965), p. 370 (Dublin, 1753); Ephraim Eytan, ‘A Fine Pair of Irish Bagpipes’, *An Píobaire* iii, 40, 26 (Scotland, 1758); Sean Donnelly, ‘The Irish Light Infantry, the 90th Foot, 1759-63’, *Piping Times*, xli, 8 (May 1989), 35, 37 (Cork, 1759); Roderick D. Cannon (ed.), *Joseph MacDonald’s COMPLETE THEORY OF THE SCOTS HIGHLAND BAGPIPE (c. 1760)*, (Edinburgh, 1994), p. 77; W.H. Mahony, ‘Irish footsteps in New Jersey sands’, *Journal of the American Irish Historical Society* xxxvi (1927), 248 (New Jersey, 1766).

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Carolan, ‘Macdonnell’s uilleann pipes’, *Ceol* vi, 2 (April 1984), 59-61; for the previous use of ‘organ’ for a bagpipe, see John Wilson (ed.), *Roger North on Music: being a selection from his essays written during the years c. 1695-1728* (London, 1959), p. 41 (1676), and Percy A. Scholes (ed.), *The Oxford companion to music* (Oxford, 1938; 10th ed., revised and edited by John Owen Ward, Oxford, 1970), plate 8 (1772).

<sup>10</sup> William Van Lemep, et al., (eds.), *The London Stage 1660-1800* (5 vols., Carbondale, Ill., 1963-8), V, p. 1355; Iain Bain, ‘Thomas and Robert Bewick and their connections with Northumbrian piping’, *Northumbrian Pipers’ Society magazine* iii (1982), 17.

<sup>11</sup> Nicholas Carolan, ‘Shakespeare’s uilleann pipes’, *Ceol* v, 1 (July 1981), 4-8.

<sup>12</sup> Brian Boydell, ‘Georgian lollipops’, in Hugh Shields (ed.), *Popular music in eighteenth-century Dublin* (Dublin, 1985), p. 9.

Nothing is known about this maker other than a late, vague claim that he had been the father of John Egan, the nineteenth-century harpmaker, which has led to the assumption that the pipemaker's forename was also 'John'.<sup>13</sup> (Lady Morgan, who knew the harpmaker, stated that his father had been a blacksmith.) In November 1767, Henry Colquhoun and John Gavagan, 'wind-instrument makers', then at the Sign of the Fiddle, George's Lane (having lately moved from Cork Hill), Dublin, advertised that they 'also make Bagpipes'.<sup>14</sup> Also in the 1760s, the well-known London music-seller and publisher Robert Bremner was selling 'Bagpipes, Scotch or Irish'.<sup>15</sup> During the 1780s and 90s, James Perry (of the famous violin-making family), was selling stringed instruments in Back Lane, Kilkenny city, besides German flutes and, it is claimed – though somewhat doubtfully – pipes.<sup>16</sup>

Two sets of pipes attributed to the elder Kenna are in The Bagpipe Museum, Morpeth Chantry, Morpeth, Northumberland. One has a double-chanter, three drones and, most unusually, a single eight-keyed regulator. 'H. Doherty' is engraved on the mainstock ferrule, along with a coat-of-arms. The chanter and drones of this set could easily date from the 1760s or 70s; the regulator, though, which would have had an unusually wide

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<sup>13</sup> Seán Donnelly, 'Lord Edward Fitzgerald's pipes', *Ceol* vi, 1 (April 1983), 7-11.

<sup>14</sup> F. Carroll, 'Dublin music-sellers, 18th century, etc.', *The Irish Booklover* xxxi (1949-51), 130.

Contemporary Dublin almanacs do not list this partnership.

<sup>15</sup> Eric Halpenny, 'An eighteenth-century trade-list of musical instruments', *The Galpin Society Journal* xvii (1962), 100.

<sup>16</sup> John Teahan, 'A list of Irish instrument-makers', *The Galpin Society Journal* vx (1963), 31.

Teahan gives the years '1786' and '1792' in his entry for Perry, presumably the dates of newspaper-advertisements. The advertisement for 1786 has yet to be found; but the later one is probably to be identified with that which James Perry placed in *Finn's Leinster Journal*, 1 August 1792. He stated that he had been in business for eleven years, and listed the musical instruments he had for sale. These included fifes but not pipes, and if John Teahan was not mistaken this means that the references to pipes must have been in the 1786 advertisement.

range appears to have been a later addition.<sup>17</sup> ‘KENNA/MULLINGAR’ is stamped on the chanter-stock, but ‘KENNA/DUBLIN’ on the mainstock. The latter is surrounded by four quatrefoil (four-leaved) stamps, intended, perhaps, to represent the younger Kenna’s trademark: a shamrock consisting of three leaves plus a stem; possibly the younger Kenna, subsequent to settling in Dublin, refurbished this set. W.A. Cocks, who originally assembled the Morpeth collection, identified a second set as the work of the elder Kenna from its resemblance to the preceding one. This has three drones and no regulators; the chanter is not original, and the tenor drone, of ivory, is also a replacement; an illegible stamp appears on the mainstock.<sup>18</sup>

#### ORGANS AND SPINNING WHEELS

The claim that the first of the Kennas was originally a wheelwright, and that he built an organ for the Roman Catholic ‘chapel’ in Mullingar, originate in a work published in 1807 by the novelist Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan:

A remarkably fine-toned organ, with six stops, has been lately placed in the Roman-catholic chapel at Mullingar, built by a poor wheelwright, a native of the town. He had commenced bagpipe-making a few years before, without any previous instruction, and shortly afterwards completed a good piano-forte.<sup>19</sup>

Since the 1730s Mullingar had possessed a large chapel, the only slated one between Dublin and Galway, complete with aisles and galleries.<sup>20</sup> Such buildings contravened the Penal Laws, but the authorities tolerated them, if only to avoid embarrassment

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<sup>17</sup> Ken McLeod is of the opinion that the regulator is not the work of either of the known Kennas.

<sup>18</sup> Information from Anne Moore, Curator of the Bagpipe Museum, Morpeth Chantry.

<sup>19</sup> *Patriotic sketches of Ireland, written mainly in the province of Connaught* (2 vols, London, 1807) I, p. 161.

<sup>20</sup> J.H. Andrews with K.M. Davies (eds), *Mullingar*. Irish Historical Towns Atlas V (Dublin, 1992), p. 14; Anthony Cogan, *The diocese of Meath, ancient and modern* (3 vols, Dublin, 1862-70), II, pp 475-6.

when unsafe buildings collapsed on congregations hearing mass in secret.<sup>21</sup> But how many public chapels would have had organs is impossible to say. In 1749 two Dublin convents had organs in their chapels, which would have been private, but none of the public chapels is said to have had one.<sup>22</sup> The next year, ‘a large mass house (or chappell rather)’ being erected near the centre of Galway city was also to have an organ.<sup>23</sup> But outside urban centres organs seem not to have been common in eighteenth-century chapels: for instance, harpers are known to have played at mass, and even in the nineteenth century pipers did so in the absence of an organ.<sup>24</sup>

The Mullingar chapel, then, would not have been unusual in having an organ installed. Accepting that a Kenna was responsible, the installation must have taken place some years before 1807, when Lady Morgan wrote, and after 1770, when the first Kenna commenced business in the general vicinity. Various Catholic Relief Acts were passed between 1778 onward and 1793, with the result that the building of new churches and the upgrading of existing ones would have accelerated. At first sight, Lady Morgan’s statement in 1807 that the organ had been ‘lately’ placed in the chapel at Mullingar would imply that the installation took place towards the end of this period. Were this so, the builder is likely to have been the younger Kenna: he was to advertise his competence in dealing with organs and all other musical instruments, and was certainly in business by 1800, and probably for some years before that. But the reference to the pipemaker as having been a wheelwright would point to the elder Kenna: by the 1790s, the Kennas had been in business for at least twenty years, and could not have been said to have lately commenced making pipes. In all likelihood, Lady Morgan’s pipemaker was a conflation of the elder and younger makers.

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<sup>21</sup> Maureen Wall, *The Penal Laws 1690-1760* (Dublin, 1976), pp 45-6.

<sup>22</sup> Patrick Fagan, *The Second City: portrait of Dublin, 1700-1760* (Dublin, 1980), pp 131-2.

<sup>23</sup> W.P. Burke, *The Irish priests in the Penal times, 1660-1760* (Waterford, 1914), p. 420.

<sup>24</sup> Donal O’Sullivan (ed.), *Carolan: the life, times and music of an Irish harper* (2 vols., London, 1958), I, p. 12, 82; II, p. 146; O’Neill, *Irish minstrels*, pp 222-3.

As to when the installation of the organ could have taken place, this could have been in the 1780s. On the 1 June 1788, the bishop of Meath, Dr Plunket, recorded in his diary that there was a newly-built chapel in Mullingar, and that an existing one had been repaired.<sup>25</sup> The new chapel was the immediate predecessor of the present cathedral, which was begun in 1830. It was a substantial and commodious building: in 1830, 3,000 people were attending the three masses celebrated each Sunday.<sup>26</sup> Other pipemakers are also said to have been organ-builders, including the father of the Taylor brothers of Drogheda, co. Louth.<sup>27</sup> Even in the first decades of the twentieth century, William Rowsome (1870-1925), who lived at 18 Armstrong Street, Harold's Cross, Dublin, is said to have repaired the organ in the church of Our Lady of Refuge in nearby Rathmines.<sup>28</sup> (In this church his son Leo (1903-70) married Helena Williams, a music-teacher and choir-mistress, from Taghmon, co. Wexford, on 2 April 1934.)<sup>29</sup>

THE YOUNGER KENNA, ?1800 – c.1840

There is a gap of thirty-two years in our knowledge of the Kennas, and the next reference, dated 1802, is almost certainly to the younger, Timothy. This gap means that whether the Thomas Kenna of O'Neill's account existed must remain uncertain; he was not, as was seen above, the younger maker. Though documentary evidence for him is lacking, he could possibly have come between James and Timothy. The Mullingar parish registers do record the death of 'Thomas Keena' from Irishtown on 20 October 1791; but without further details this man cannot be connected to the

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<sup>25</sup> John Brady, *A short history of the parishes of Mullingar and Navan: part III in continuation of THE DIOCESE OF MEATH, ANCIENT AND MODERN*, by Rev. A. Cogan (Navan, 1938), pp 70, 71.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Breandan Breathnach, 'Pipers and piping in Louth', *County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society Journal* xix, no. 2 (1978), 133.

<sup>28</sup> Information from the late Eddie Potts via Michael O'Connor.

<sup>29</sup> *The Irish Press*, 3 April 1934.

pipemaking family, given that his surname (variously spelt) is fairly common in these registers.<sup>30</sup> This possibility that Thomas Kenna was a ghost-name is discussed below.

The 1802 reference to Kenna is a newspaper-advertisement which Séamas Ó Casaide transcribed into a notebook, now among his papers in the National Library of Ireland. *The Dublin Evening Post*, 12 August 1802, was the source Ó Casaide gave for the advertisement. Unfortunately this is wrong: a search of that newspaper for the given date in 1802, and in some years before and after drew a blank. Normally careful and scholarly, Ó Casaide may have mistaken the newspaper rather than the date. The layout of the piece, shown by slash-marks, seems to differ from that of advertisements appearing in the *Dublin Evening Post* at the beginning of the nineteenth century. If Ó Casaide did get the title of the paper wrong, he is all the more likely to have got the date right. Almost certainly further research will throw up the original advertisement:

#### KENNA'S NEW IMPROVED IRISH PIPES

SWEETNESS of Tone, sensibility of Touch

and simplicity of construction, are Kenna's great objects, which this instrument at present possess, with an organ stop, and the very curious manner in which the additional keys on the chanter, unison and pupilow [*sic*] regulators which the latter is performed on without a reed, and touched as usual, which admits this instrument of going higher and lower than any other instrument of that kind ever before made in this kingdom, and no failure or disappointment of tone.

N.B. KENNA gives regular instructions for the fingering chords, and tuning for this instrument, which render them easy to be performed on, and no possibility of their being out of order.

KENNA, Mullingar.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Note 6 above.

<sup>31</sup> NLI MS 8117/3.

This advertisement is of great importance and interest, and though points are clear some others are obscure. Kenna states he has put ‘additional keys’ on the chanter, thus implying that it already had keys, and on the regulators, of which there were two (at least). This contrasts with the pipes as O’Farrell described them in his 1804 tutor. His had a keyless chanter and one regulator, the ‘g’, more or less the type of instrument Egan of Dublin was making in the 1760s and 70s.<sup>32</sup> Probably O’Farrell did not reflect the latest developments in pipemaking. There is a hint in a work published in 1795 that he was already performing by the early 1770s, but against such an early date for him is that he was last heard of playing in Edinburgh in 1832.<sup>33</sup> But the fact is that he performed on and wrote his tutor for an instrument that was identical with the type current in the 1760s and 70s, while at least some of his contemporaries were already using more sophisticated pipes.<sup>34</sup>

The older, simpler type of instrument continued to be played throughout the nineteenth century. In 1942 the pipemaker and piper James MacCrone (more correctly ‘Mulcrone’), who was born in Abbeyshrule, co. Longford, in 1868, said that the travelling pipers he heard in his childhood ‘... used have a small puny-looking set of pipes always. You wouldn’t give 5/- for them by the look of them, ... . They had very seldom any regulators at all; nearly always two drones alone. If they had any regulators it was only the one or two they ever had.’<sup>35</sup> Further evidence that large, full sets of pipes were a rare sight in the late nineteenth century, in some areas anyway, occurs in folklore Séumas Ennis took down in Carna, Connemara, co. Galway, in November 1942. Speaking of two pipers who had frequented Carna fifty or sixty years earlier,

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<sup>32</sup> *O’Farrell’s collection of national Irish music for the union pipes, ... Also a treatise with the most perfect instructions ever yet published for the pipes* (London, 1804), p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> Mary Lyons (ed.), *The Memoirs of Mrs Leeson, Madam, 1727-97* (Dublin, 1996), pp 52, 254; Keith Sanger, ‘Irish Pipers and Scotland, III,’ *Piping Times* li (October 1998), 31-2.

<sup>34</sup> See, for instance, Seán Donnelly, ‘A Piper and the Press: Patrick O’Connor of Limerick, 1816-18’, *Ceol na hÉireann* ii (1994), 79-98.

<sup>35</sup> Seán Donnelly, ‘James McCrone Remembers II’, *An Píobaire* ii, 42 (Eanáir 1989), 7.

Ennis' informant said of one, Colm Ó Lonnáin, *píopaí móra abhí aige (méid)*, 'he had large pipes (size)'. Ennis probably added 'size' in brackets to avoid a later misunderstanding of *píopaí móra* as *píob mhór*, the Irish and Scottish Gaelic term for the Highland bagpipe.<sup>36</sup> Of the second piper Pádraig Mac Donnchadha, the well-known Patrick MacDonagh from Claregalway, who died in the first decade of the twentieth century, the informant told Ennis that his pipes were *suas le dhá shlat ar fhad* 'nearly two yards in length', stretching out his arms to show their length, Ennis noted, and that the bass regulator cap was *chomh reamhar le mug* 'as big as a mug'.<sup>37</sup> With both pipers the actual size of their instruments was remembered, which implies that the pipes were much larger than what was normally seen in the area.

Keyed-chanters were already in use by the mid-eighteenth century: John Geoghegan, almost certainly another native of co. Westmeath, writing c. 1746 of what he called the Pastoral bagpipe, mentions that he had heard of such chanters, though had not actually seen one.<sup>38</sup> As just mentioned, one regulator appears to have been the norm on the pipes since at least the 1760s: the earliest datable set so equipped is that which once belonged to Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763-98), though it was not made for him. Stamped 'Egan', this set is made of ivory with a replacement wooden chanter. The date '1768' is engraved on the mainstock ferrule, a date confirmed by the hallmark on a silver ferrule covering an extension to the single regulator.<sup>39</sup> It must be stressed, though, that these pipes are exceptional in having a date inscribed on them; there could be sets around that are older, but by how much can only be guessed at.

Kenna's calling one regulator a 'unison' regulator would tend to support Breandán Breathnach's suggestion, put forward in 1971, on the possible origin of the term

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<sup>36</sup> Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin, MS 1280, f. 407.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 408.

<sup>38</sup> Roderick D. Cannon, 'Bagpipes in English works of art', *The Galpin Society Journal* xlii (1989), 20.

<sup>39</sup> Seán Donnelly, 'Lord Edward Fitzgerald's pipes', *Ceol* vi, 1 (April 1983), 7-11.

‘union’, first found in print in 1791:<sup>40</sup> ‘The tenor regulator which sounds in unison with the chanter was the first to be added to the pipes. A plausible explanation for the name ‘union’ is that this regulator and the chanter were regarded as being joined together or being in union with each other.’<sup>41</sup> The term ‘pupilow’ was in the original advertisement: O Casaide marked it ‘*sic*’. If not a typographical error, the word is likely to be a phonetic spelling of a French or, more likely, an Italian musical term, perhaps something like ‘pipolo’. But this term does not appear in any of the music dictionaries I have been able to consult, and no music scholar I asked was able to throw any light on it. Italian terms for pipe-organ stops, though similar in form, do not include anything resembling ‘pupilow/pipolo’.<sup>42</sup> (A slightly similar term, *pibole*, meant ‘a kind of bagpipe’ in seventeenth-century French.)<sup>43</sup> Kenna’s claim that the regulator in question could be ‘performed on without a reed’ presumably meant that it did not require a separate reed, and was somehow an extension of one of the other regulators. This development may have been a step on the way to developing separate g’ and d’ regulators, each with its own reed, which had certainly appeared by the second decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup>

What Kenna meant by ‘organ stop’ is also unclear. The term now means a rank of pipes in an organ; originally it meant the slider that cut off the air supply to a rank of

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<sup>40</sup> Note 10 above.

<sup>41</sup> *Folkmusic and dances of Ireland* (Dublin, 1971), p. 82. Shakespeare uses the term ‘union’ in a musical context in his sonnet, ‘Music to hear, why hear’st thou music sadly?’: ‘If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,/By unions married, do offend thine ear, ...’ (lls 5-6).

<sup>42</sup> Irvin Stevens, *Dictionary of pipe-organ stops* (London and New York, 1962; 2nd ed., 1983), pp 408-10 (Baroque stops).

<sup>43</sup> Thurston Dart, ‘Music and musical instruments in Cotgrave’s *Dictionarie* (1611)’, *The Galpin Society Journal* xxi (1968), 72; Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l’ancienne langue Francaise* (Paris, 1889), sub *pibole*.

<sup>44</sup> Donnelly, ‘A Piper and the Press’, 91.

pipes, thereby allowing another sound.<sup>45</sup> If the term is taken in its original sense, there is a chance that Kenna meant a stop-key on the chanter-stock. The function of this key has always been assumed to have been that of silencing the chanter while the drones are tuned; but this is easily done by pinching the neck of the bag, which is what most pipers do. Perhaps the stop-key on the chanter-stock was added to allow a piper to silence the chanter while he played certain passages of a tune on the regulators, particularly on the bass. Were this so, it would have fulfilled the original function of an organ-stop: silencing one pipe to allow another to sound.

There is a certain amount of evidence for this suggestion. Francis O'Neill quotes examples of pipers who could play all or parts of tunes on the regulators;<sup>46</sup> in the early 1840s, Mr and Mrs C.S. Hall remarked of the Irish pipes that the regulators 'not only produce the most delightful accords, but enable the player to produce parts of tunes, and sometimes whole tunes, without using the chanter at all. Both drones and chanter can be silenced at will ...'.<sup>47</sup> In his tutor of c. 1820, S.T. Colclough stated that the addition of the bass-regulator meant that 'any Flute or Violin pieces can be performed on the Pipes except those of a very difficult execution ...', and tabulated the notes on the bass-regulator as if it were a downward extension of the chanter. He also noted that one of the simple lessons he gives for a beginner can be played an octave lower on the bass-regulator.<sup>48</sup> Both these statements imply that the chanter must be stopped while the melody (or portion thereof) is played on the bass regulator. Dr Richard Henebry (1863-1916) writes of 'snapping' the note c' in a version of 'Rakish Paddy' learned from a fiddler off the top key on the bass regulator.<sup>49</sup>

Another, a more intriguing possibility is that the 'organ stop' in question was an additional regulator, perhaps what is now called the bass; yet why Kenna should call it

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<sup>45</sup> I am grateful to Cillian O Briain, Dingle, for this information.

<sup>46</sup> *Irish minstrels*, p. 244.

<sup>47</sup> *Ireland: its scenery, character &c* (3 vols, London, 1841-3), II, p. 413.

<sup>48</sup> S.T. Colclough, *New and complete instructions for the union pipes* (Dublin, n.d.[c. 1820]), pp 3, 5.

<sup>49</sup> 'Concerning Piping I', *Sinn Fein*, 20 April 1907.

this is somewhat puzzling. Some evidence for this suggestion appears in an interview with William Kennedy (1768-1834), the blind pipemaker of Tandragee, co. Armagh, published in the *Belfast Monthly Magazine* i (September-October 1808).<sup>50</sup> The highly musical Kennedy appears to have been a mechanical genius who could turn his hand to many crafts – though it was as a pipemaker he is best-remembered. While he is invariably referred to as being completely blind, the nature of the crafts he is said to have practised – cabinet-making, clock and watch making, the manufacture of looms for the linen trade, and the making and repairing of pipes and other musical instruments – would certainly argue that he had some degree of sight at close quarters.<sup>51</sup>

Kennedy's interviewer credits him with various innovations on the pipes, among them adding keys to the chanter – one to give e'' above d'' – restructuring the drones so as they could be altered to suit the key in which a piece was being played and, apparently, adding two stop-keys on the drones. A further improvement Kennedy made was 'two additional notes given by him to the Organ-stop, and some of its notes are now capable of being varied from naturals to sharps, according to the key on [sic] which the tune is played.'<sup>52</sup>

Discussing the passage just quoted, Ken McLeod notes that the journalist, possibly only vaguely familiar with the pipes, might well have become confused concerning Kennedy's claimed improvements. Nevertheless, McLeod would accept that 'organ stop' meant 'regulator', a meaning that in the context is by far the most likely. McLeod also poses a number of very interesting questions about the terminology used of the pipes. In view of the fact that the instrument was called the 'Irish organ', or 'Irish organ pipes', during the 1770s and 80s, he asks whether it was possible that 'organ stop' was the original term for what was subsequently called a 'regulator', and could

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<sup>50</sup> I wish to thank Ken McLeod for a copy of this article and others on William Kennedy.

<sup>51</sup> Ken McLeod, 'William Kennedy – Blind pipemaker of Tandragee', *An Píobaire* iii, 26 (May 1996), 16-18.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

these two terms have been used in different parts of the country to denote the same thing.<sup>53</sup>

The term ‘regulator’, usually assumed to have been first published in O’Farrell’s 1804 tutor, had already appeared in print in 1790.<sup>54</sup> It is not an uncommon word in English, but its use in the context of the Irish pipes has never been explained satisfactorily. There is no plausible Irish term for ‘regulator’, and the Connacht poet Raiftearaí used the English in his song in praise of Seaghán Ó Branáin, a highly skilled friend of his who could make anything under the sun.<sup>55</sup> Assuming, for the sake of argument, that Kenna’s ‘organ stop’ was the bass regulator, this would mean that the Irish pipes had three regulators at least two decades earlier than was previously thought. But this question is distorted by the lack of reliable illustrations: the few dating from the 1820s and 30s showing a three-regulator set of pipes mean that the bass regulator had been added before these pictures were executed. Kenna does claim that his pipes were capable ‘of going higher and lower than any other instrument of that kind ever before made in this kingdom, ...’; while it is impossible to be certain, the only way in which the range of the instrument could have been extended downward is by the addition of a bass regulator.

No further details of Kenna’s career in Mullingar have survived. Pipers ran some ill-conducted dance-houses in the town in the earlier half of the nineteenth century. A number of shebeens stood along Piper’s Boreen, Wrangleborough, which led to the flyboat landing-stage on the Royal Canal. This boreen was said to have been named

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>54</sup> *O’Farrell’s collection of national Irish music*, pp 15-16; Edward Ledwich (ed.), *The antiquities of Ireland* (Dublin, 1790), p. 242.

<sup>55</sup> Among the Irish terms for parts of the pipes that John Joyce, a co. Galway piper, gave to Lord Walter Fitzgerald of Kilkea Castle, co. Kildare, in 1898 was the obviously artificial *maide eochrach* ‘keyed stick’ for ‘regulator’ (Nicholas Carolan, ‘Téarmaí’, *An Píobaire* ii, 4 (Bealtaine 1979), 2. For the Raiftearaí mention, see Dubhglas de hÍde (eag.), *Abhráin agus dánta an Reachtaraigh ...* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1933; athchló 1969), lch. 258.

from a piper, or pipers, who lived there. On a levelled spot near the landing-stage these pipers, the most celebrated of whom was surnamed Murray, traditionally played for open-air dancing on Sundays, as well as entertaining passengers disembarking from the canal-boats.<sup>56</sup> Westmeath was to remain a centre of piping well into this century, and the names of quite a number of pipers from the county are known.<sup>57</sup>

By early 1812 Kenna had moved to Dublin. He placed the following newspaper-advertisement in the *Freeman's Journal*, 23 March 1812:

#### GRAND UNION PIPES

Kenna from Mullingar, GRAND UNION PIPE MAKER,  
respectfully acquaints the lovers of that ancient  
NATIONAL INSTRUMENT, that he at present lives at No. 1,  
Essex Quay, Dublin, where they can be gratified with this  
so very favourite Instrument, in its most improved and  
perfect state, he having by great application and study  
brought it to a degree of perfection heretofore unknown  
in Ireland, being equal if not superior in tone to the best  
London pianos. - gives instructions to perform on this  
Instrument

N.B. - Organs repaired voiced and tuned in a perfec[t]  
masterly manner. Piano Fortes, &c. &c. Musical  
Instruments of every description put in order.

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<sup>56</sup> Westmeath County Library, Tom Conlan's Articles in the *Westmeath Examiner*, 1950 (typescript), pp 230, 235, 239. I am very much obliged to Micheál Ó Conláin, Castlepollard, co. Westmeath, for these references

<sup>57</sup> For Westmeath pipers, see Celine Murray and Bernadette Finnerty, *Traditional Irish music in County Westmeath*. Reprinted from the *Westmeath Examiner*, May-June 1963 (Mullingar, n.d. [?1963]).

The wording and tone of this advertisement is so close to the 1802 one that the same person is likely to have placed both. Apparently Kenna's choice of address was not haphazard. There were various skilled craftsmen, such as watchmakers and clockmakers, on the quay during the early decades of the nineteenth century; coincidentally, a 'John Kenna, watchmaker', occupied 31 Essex Quay in 1848 and 30 Essex Quay in 1850, having been at 161 Capel Street in 1845. Probably the most famous craftsman to work on Essex Quay was the celebrated Dublin medallist William Mossop (1751-1804), who was at 13 Essex Quay from 1784, where his son, also William (1788-27), succeeded him.<sup>58</sup>

These craftsmen included musical-instrument makers.<sup>59</sup> In 1824, for example, there was John Dollard at no. 15, M. Holles (military) at no. 7 and John Mackintosh at no. 10. Previously, in 1818, 'John M'Kintosh, violin maker', was listed in one source at 1 Essex Quay; which, if correct, would imply that he was then sharing the premises with Kenna.<sup>60</sup> Two of these makers are known to have made pipes – though they did not specifically advertise doing so. Patrick Hussey produced an unusual set now in the National Museum of Ireland, and a flute by him is in private possession.<sup>61</sup> He was at 4 Essex Quay from 1810 to 1816, at 7 Liffey Street in 1817 and in Great Britain Street from 1818 to 1820. Matthew Corcoran, who came after Kenna and is known from one set of pipes and various flutes. He was at 20½ Essex Quay, 1841-2, and at 20, 1844-50. From 1851 to 1884 he worked in Philadelphia, where his career would have overlapped with that of the famous Taylor brothers from Drogheda, co. Louth.<sup>62</sup> 'Hugh Browne, musical instrument maker', was returned in the 1831 Census at 1 Essex Quay – though

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<sup>58</sup> Sir John T. Gilbert, *History of the city of Dublin* (3 vols., Dublin, 1854-9), II, pp 121-31.

<sup>59</sup> For examples, see Teahan, 'Irish instrument makers', 30, 32.

<sup>60</sup> NA, MS M3079.

<sup>61</sup> William Waterhouse (ed.), *The New Langwill Index: A dictionary of musical wind-instrument makers and inventors* (London, 1993), p. 187.

<sup>62</sup> Teahan, 'Irish instrument-makers', 28, 30, 32; Hugh Cheape, *A check-list of bagpipes in the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments* (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 10;

Waterhouse, *The New Langwill Index*, p. 71.

he is not listed in the street-directories (by then Kenna was no longer at no. 1).<sup>63</sup> A pipemaker surnamed Browne was functioning in Dublin during this approximate period; at least one set of his pipes and a number of chanters have survived.<sup>64</sup> He has been identified with William Brown(e), ‘Musical and Wind-Instrument Maker’, who worked at 163 Abbey Street, Dublin, 1808–10, and perhaps Hugh Browne was related.<sup>65</sup>

Essex Quay was to have a further piping connection in the late 1920s when Billy Andrews (1873-1939) opened a small shop at no. 17, selling, repairing and teaching the Highland and uilleann pipes.<sup>66</sup> For some years the shop was a gathering place for pipers of all persuasions, and among those who came for lessons and reeds were the likes of Dan O’Dowd (1903-89), Breandán Breathnach (1912-85), and a very young Tommy Reck (1921-91), who was to earn a great reputation playing on a fine Kenna set. Next door was a second-hand furniture shop run by a grandson of Nicholas Markey (1836-1914), the original instructor to the Dublin Pipers’ Club, where Andrews, along with the likes of John Potts (1876-1956) and Jimmy Ennis (1884-1964) learned their trade.<sup>67</sup> The shop, unfortunately, was not a success, closing about 1932, and in after years Andrews was still rather bitter about its failure.<sup>68</sup>

As Kenna stated that he ‘at present lives at No.1 Essex Quay’, and not that he had just moved to Dublin, he may have been based in the city for some time before March 1812. Coincidentally there was an upsurge in piping in various taverns in the general vicinity of Essex Quay during the years 1811–12, with tavern-keepers advertising the various

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> The set, with a bass regulator by Michael Egan of Liverpool, is in The Bagpipe Museum, Morpeth Chantry.

<sup>65</sup> Teahan, ‘A list of Irish instrument-makers’, 28.

<sup>66</sup> Breandan Breathnach, ‘Pipers and piping in Louth’, *County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society Journal* xix, no. 2 (1978), 136.

<sup>67</sup> Information from the late Tommy Reck.

<sup>68</sup> Sláinte [Billy Andrews], ‘Free State Notes’, *Piping and dancing* iv, 8 (April, 1939), 3.

famous pipers they had procured for their clients' delectation. The taverns were all within a few minutes' walk of Essex Quay, and while the occasional player was lured across the Liffey to Capel Street and Mary Street, they were still within a short distance of Essex Quay.<sup>69</sup> But pipers had begun to be attractions in taverns in the area well before this. In a brief memoir dictated when he was eighty-two in 1878, John Burke of Chamber Street, Dublin, reminisced: 'I have a perfect recollection of Drumgoole's Tavern in Lamb Alley in Cornmarket, where the famous Irish Piper Geoghegan used to play. I often went to hear him with my father ... . I would say I was there in 1807,...'.<sup>70</sup>

Strangely, it was to be five years before 'T. Kenna, Musical Instrument Maker' began to appear in the Dublin street-directories.<sup>71</sup> Between 1817 and 1833 he was at the following addresses:

1 Essex Quay	1817–22
18 Wood Quay	1823
1 Wood Quay	1824–5
2 Essex Quay	1826–33

The entry is more or less identical in the various directories, except in *Pigot and co.'s city of Dublin and Hibernian provincial directory* (Dublin, 1824), where it reads,

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<sup>69</sup> Seán Donnelly, 'Dublin 170 years ago', *An Píobaire* ii, 12-13 (Feabhra 1982), 2, 5; O'Neill, *Irish minstrels*, pp 198-200.

<sup>70</sup> K.Hart, 'John Bourke's Recollection', *Dublin Historical Record* vi, (1943-4), 151. Bourke's memory would appear to have been excellent: an advertisement for Geoghegan in Drumgoole's Tavern appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* in early 1807 (information from Nicholas Carolan). This piper, who was noticed previously in 1792, is hardly likely to have been the John Geoghegan who published the famous tutor for the 'pastoral or new bagpipe' c. 1746. He could have been a son or grandson, though, and his surname would suggest that he was a fellow-countyman of Kenna's.

<sup>71</sup> The directories consulted were *Pettigrew and Oulton's Dublin Almanac and General Register of Ireland*, the *Post Office Directory* and, from 1844, *Thom's directory*.

'Kenna, Michael Timothy, (Grand Union Pipes), 1 Essex Quay' (p. 86). This entry is important in that it confirms that, at least by that date, the initial 'T' in the entry stood for 'Timothy' and not 'Thomas'. The address given also contradicts that in the other directories, but this change, and the others listed, may have been no more than the renumbering of premises on Essex Quay/Wood Quay.

While the junction with Fishamble Street is popularly thought to divide Essex Quay and Wood Quay, the former actually commenced on the west (upriver) side of the junction. The order from west to east (down-river) was: junction of Winetavern Street, Wood Quay, nos. 1-3 Essex Quay, junction of Fishamble Street, Essex Quay, junction of Parliament Street, formerly Essex Bridge. At the time Kenna first settled on Essex Quay, Fishamble Street did not open directly on to it. Instead a person coming down the hill turned left on to Lower Exchange Street which merged into Wood Quay, passing the rear of Kenna's premises. But by the 1820s a junction with the quay had been created, perhaps to obviate the sharp turn on to Lower Exchange Street, leaving nos. 1-3 Essex Quay standing on their own as a block. The site of Kenna's workshop now lies under the Dublin Civic Offices, the official address of which is Wood Quay. But up to some years ago, there were two nameplates, side by side on the western side of the junction with Fishamble Street, marking the boundary of Essex Quay to Wood Quay.

As mentioned, there appears to be no known evidence for Thomas Kenna, and there is a chance that he was a ghost, a possibility raised by a coincidence in regard to the site of Kenna's workshop. Within yards of the workshop, at 19 Fishamble Street, 'Thomas Kennan and Sons, Turning Lathe Manufacturers' (and also 'Tool Makers'), had their premises. By the mid-nineteenth century, 'Kennan and Sons' were specialising in horticultural machinery, of which they were 'inventors and manufacturers'.<sup>72</sup> (This firm became famous because it was beside the site of the music hall where Handel's *Messiah* was first performed in 1742, and most drawings of the site show Kennans.) The name 'Kennan', in a slightly different form, is still on the premises. The closeness of the

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<sup>72</sup> Neilly Ó Cléirigh, 'The Dublin International Exhibition, 1865', *Dublin Historical Record* xviii, 2 (Autumn 1994), 178.

two premises could have led to the confusion of 'T. Kenna' with 'Thomas Kennan'. In the street-directories, 'Thomas Kennan and Sons' immediately follows 'T. Kenna' and, as a consequence, is occasionally misspelled 'Thomas Kenna and Sons'.

1834 saw the entries in the street-directories change: from then until 1841 the directories list 'Timothy M'Kenna, 2 Essex Quay', as a maker/manufacturer/seller of musical instruments, and also as 'Fishing Tackle Manufacturer'. From 1833 until 1847-8, 'Anne Kenna', with the same qualifications – though the fishing-tackle reference was dropped in 1840 – is also listed for 2 Essex Quay. The two entries usually appear together, but occasionally only one or the other is found. In 1839, for instance, 'Timothy M'Kenna, 2 Essex Quay', occurs under 'Musical Instrument Makers', but does not turn up in the alphabetical list of merchants and tradesmen, whereas 'Anne Kenna' does.

Who was the 'Anne Kenna' who appeared from 1833? and what was the significance, if any, of the change from 'T. Kenna' to 'Timothy M'Kenna' 1834? There is no clear answer to either question. That Anne was Kenna's wife and carried on the business after he died or was incapacitated is possible; it was a very common practice. Kenna could have been quite old by the 1830s. If he had placed the 1802 advertisement (which is more than likely), he would then have been working for more than thirty years, and how long before 1802 he had succeeded to the business in Mullingar is impossible to say. There were also numerous diseases and ailments endemic in the early nineteenth century. Coincidentally, in 1832 a cholera epidemic ravaged Dublin, killing 5,632 people in the poorer areas of the city, and while Essex Quay was not itself impoverished, it was in the middle of an extremely poor area.<sup>73</sup>

The change in the form of the surname occurs the year after the appearance of Anne Kenna but, oddly, she retained the original form. The resumption of 'O' or 'Mac' in a

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<sup>73</sup> J.H. Martin, 'The social geography of nineteenth-century Dublin', in W.J. Smyth and Kevin

Whelan (eds.), *Common Ground: Essays on the historical geography of Ireland presented to T. Jones Hughes, M.A., M.R.I.A.*, (Cork, 1988), pp 178, 183.

surname would not have been unusual thirty or forty years earlier. Many Roman Catholic merchants and tradesmen, often the younger sons of landed gentry, resumed these prefixes in the wake of the various Catholic relief acts passed between 1778 and 1792.<sup>74</sup> 1834 was five years after the passing of Catholic Emancipation, but if Kenna only felt safe to restore 'Mac' to his surname as late as that, his caution must have verged on paranoia. As far as I know, 'M'Kenna' does not appear on any set of pipes.

But the change here could possibly have denoted a change in proprietorship, with a son succeeding his father. This would necessarily imply that there were two Timothy Kennas, and that the second one had a fairly brief career. Again, we lack any evidence, but Francis O'Neill did state that the younger Kenna had succeeded the elder on Essex Quay, and that he had more or less coasted along on the family reputation. What if the traditions O'Neill published concerned not the first and second generation of the family, but the second and third, both of them bearing the forename 'Timothy'? Succeeding generations of a family with the same forename, or first cousins named after the same relative, are a genealogist's curse. To distinguish them is often nearly impossible, especially if a son succeeded his father and died, or gave up the business, after a comparatively brief period. There is a tendency to assume that the one man was in question all the way through.

If the post-1833 'Timothy M'Kenna' is to be distinguished from the pre-1833 'T. Kenna', he had, as mentioned, a fairly brief career compared to his father's. The addition of 'Fishing Tackle Manufacturer' from 1837 is also a surprise; were a pipemaker to develop a subsidiary line of work, making fishing tackle would not spring instantly to mind. The development of such a sideline could indicate that Kenna's pipemaking business was dropping off, and Francis O'Neill did state that Kenna's pipes were unrivalled until the appearance of Michael Egan in the early 1840s. Perhaps Egan was coming to the fore as a maker in the late 1830s and already cutting into Kenna's business. It would have taken time to establish a reputation, and Egan can be assumed

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<sup>74</sup> Maureen Wall, 'The rise of a Catholic middle class in the eighteenth century', in *Catholic Ireland in the eighteenth century: the collected essays of Maureen Wall* (Dublin, 1989), p. 81.

to have been making for a number of years by the time the qualities of his pipes began to be appreciated.

In the end all we can say is that (M')Kenna appears in the street-directories for the last time in 1841. He would certainly have been dead by that date, if we can trust the tradition, recorded by Francis O'Neill, that Maurice Coyne acquired his tools and business on his death. While the succession to Kenna's business on Essex Quay was more complicated than O'Neill's informants were aware of, the tradition appears to have been that Coyne succeeded Kenna. So far, though, no record of the burial of a (Michael) Timothy (M')Kenna in Dublin or Mullingar during the 1830s and 40s has come to light.<sup>75</sup>

As late as the twentieth century, however, there were musicians and pipemakers who claimed to be related to the Kennas. One of the former was Jimmy Kenna, a flute-player who flourished in the late nineteenth century around Carrickedmond and Ballinalee, co. Longford.<sup>76</sup> Another was the pipemaker John Brogan (1880-1928) of Harold's Cross, Dublin, a native of Belfast.<sup>77</sup> The surname 'Keena' was still associated with piping in the Longford/Westmeath area in the twentieth century. A piper surnamed Keena was living in Ardandra, co. Longford, c. 1900,<sup>78</sup> and Mike Keena from near Legan, co. Longford, who died in 1964, was, in the words of Willie Reynolds, 'a great performer on the uilleann pipes and played in the staccato style'.<sup>79</sup> As far as I can

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<sup>75</sup> I wish to thank Tony Cox of the Westmeath County Library, Mullingar, co. Westmeath, for checking the indexes to the Mullingar parish registers for me. I should also point out that while my search of Dublin records is yet incomplete, Kenna appears not to have been interred in either Glasnevin or Mount Jerome.

<sup>76</sup> Breandán Breathnach, *Dancing in Ireland* (Miltown Malbay, 1983), p. 29.

<sup>77</sup> NLI Ms 8118/7.

<sup>78</sup> NLI Ms 8118/8.

<sup>79</sup> Willie Reynolds, *Memories of a music-maker* (n.p., n.d. (c. 1992), pp 56-7. Pádraig Mac Gréine, Ballinalee, co. Longford, still going strong at 100 years of age, tells me that Mike Keena, whose father was a fiddler, never claimed to be related to the pipemakers.

ascertain, no traditions of the Kennas/Keenas have survived in the folklore of co. Westmeath and co. Longford: all that is known of the family derives from Francis O'Neill's book.<sup>80</sup>

As a maker Timothy Kenna appears to have had a wide range of styles, as might be expected from one who was active for so long. He ranged from fairly basic sets, with keyless chanters and one or two regulators, to elaborate sets, such those he made for Henry Robert Westenra (1792-1860), 3rd baron Rossmore, of Rossmore Hall, co. Monaghan.<sup>81</sup> A large and handsome instrument Kenna made for Joseph Myles MacDonnell (1796-1872) of Doo Castle, Ballaghaderreen, co. Mayo, MP for Mayo, 1846-7 – whose assets on his bankruptcy were sworn to consist of ‘a flute, a bagpipes and a setter dog’ – was donated to the National Museum by McDonnell's granddaughter at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>82</sup> Kenna also made flutes and Highland pipes. A flute by Potter of London with a head stamped ‘KENNA/DUBLIN’, under his shamrock trademark, was sold at auction in Dublin in 1989.<sup>83</sup> And a Highland pipe-chanter stamped ‘T. KENNA/DUBLIN’, again under his shamrock symbol, is in The Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> I wish to thank Tony Cox of Westmeath County Library for this information. Pádraig Mac Gréine collected folklore in Longford/Westmeath throughout his long life, did come across traditions about various pipers in the area but heard nothing concerning the Kennas.

<sup>81</sup> The present Lord Rossmore, Patrick Westenra, gave this set to Garech de Brún, who tells me that it was the 3th baron's second set. The baron's first was by Coyne (see below).

<sup>82</sup> Seán Donnelly, ‘A piping MP: Joseph Myles MacDonnell (1792-1972) of Doo Castle, Ballaghaderreen, co. Mayo’, *Seán Reid Society Journal* I (1998), track 8.

<sup>83</sup> *Allen and Townsend, Fine Art and Furniture Auction, Mansion House Dublin, 25-7 October 1989*, lot 1567. I wish to thank Steve Chambers of MacNeill's Music Shop, Capel Street, for a copy of this catalogue, which he annotated after examining the flute and flute-parts offered for sale.

<sup>84</sup> Cheape, *Checklist*, p. 21.

Possibly Timothy Kenna more or less established the form of the union pipes as we now have them. While later makers were to have their own individual styles of making, the basic pattern they followed appears to have been that of Kenna's 'Grand Union Pipes'.<sup>85</sup> Post-Kenna union pipes appear to have much more in common with his than with any of his predecessors. A photographic survey of all surviving pipes might throw light on this matter. Especially interesting would be the sets often dismissed as curiosities because they did not conform to what has been regarded as the standard type since Kenna's time. The odd features in these pipes might well predate the general standardisation of the form of the instrument and have been attempts to solve problems that were later solved differently. There were also changes in the external appearance of the union pipes. Down to Kenna's time, the style of turning, as well as the shape of drones, mounts, ferrules etc., was generally similar to that found in other pipemaking traditions, particularly the Scottish and Northumbrian smallpipes, and the Border pipes. But from Kenna's time, as the instrument generally tended to become larger, the style of turning and mounting used in making union pipes differed a good deal from the earlier sets.

#### THE COYNES, 1839–1864

Francis O'Neill's account of Maurice Coyne is fairly brief:

#### MAURICE COYNE

This well-known maker of Union pipes was one of four brothers, respectable young farmers, who lived in the parish of Carbury, co. Kildare, a few miles from the town of Edenderry. Maurice took to "playing the pipes" as a youth, migrated to Dublin, and acquired the tools and business of the "younger Kenna" on the latter's death. Coyne's shop was at No. 41 James Street, Dublin.<sup>86</sup>

Again, O'Neill appears to be broadly correct in his account, and there is a certain amount of evidence to substantiate the tradition that the Coynes were from Carbury, co. Kildare. The Tithe Applotment Books (1834) for the baronies of Carbury and

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<sup>85</sup> For a discussion of the term 'Grand Union Pipes' see Donnelly, 'A Piper and the Press', 92.

<sup>86</sup> *Irish minstrels*, p. 157.

Dunforth do list a number of Coynes – though not in the parish of Carbury itself – where coincidentally the surname ‘Keena’ also occurs. But even in the twentieth century there were Coynes in Ballindoolin, Carbury, who claimed to be related to the pipemakers.<sup>87</sup> But whereas O’Neill wrote that there had been only one Coyne, Maurice, three musical instrument makers of the same surname have conflated in the person of Maurice Coyne.

Timothy M’Kenna last appears in the Dublin street-directories in 1841, as we have seen, and Anne Kenna in 1848. But in 1842, one of the directories lists ‘Anne Coyne’ at 2 Essex Quay, instead of Anne Kenna, an entry that is not repeated, while the others name ‘John William Coyne, Musical Instrument Maker’, at the same address down to 1846. John William Coyne certainly made flutes, but though he is also claimed to have made union pipes there is no firm evidence that he did so.<sup>88</sup> Nothing is heard of this man in Dublin after 1846. The principal Dublin cemeteries have no record of his burial down to 1854, though in 1852 a John Coyne, aged eight, from nearby Essex Street was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery.<sup>89</sup>

This, then, is the man who actually took over Kenna’s business, not Maurice Coyne. If the 1842 directory entry for ‘Anne Coyne’ is not a slip, which is quite possible, John William may have married Anne Kenna. Almost certainly this man was related to Maurice Coyne: to suggest otherwise would be to stretch coincidence too far. O’Neill’s account gives the impression that Maurice, having taken up the pipes, more or less drifted into pipemaking; but the appearance of John William suggests that Maurice’s choice of profession was not so haphazard. There were other Coyne tradesmen and professionals operating in Dublin in the first half of the nineteenth

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<sup>87</sup> Information from Michael O’Connor, Dublin, whose informant was the piper Jack O’Connor, Moone, co. Kildare. The late Peter Flynn, a native of co. Kildare who lived to be very old, also met Coyne relatives when he was young.

<sup>88</sup> Waterhouse, *New Langwill Index*, p. 74, states that John William Coyne made pipes, but there is no actual evidence that he did so.

<sup>89</sup> Letter from the Secretary, Glasnevin Cemeteries Group, 26 February 1997.

century. One with a co. Kildare connection was the well-known Catholic activist, Richard Coyne (1786-1856), a bookseller and printer at 4 Capel Street. He was official printer to St Patrick's College, Maynooth, co. Kildare, besides being a friend and confidante of James Warren Doyle, bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, the famous 'JKL'.<sup>90</sup> During the 1820s a bookseller and printer in Cook Street (close to Essex Quay) named John Coyne was publishing spiritual works in Irish.<sup>91</sup>

Whatever his relationship to John William Coyne, Maurice made his debut as a musical-instrument maker some years before him, apparently overlapping with Timothy Kenna by at least two years. 'Maurice Coyne, Maker of Union and Scotch Bagpipes', appeared in the Dublin street-directories over a period of twenty-two years at the following addresses:

44 ½ James Street	1839
41 ½ James Street	1840
151 Thomas Street	1841–5
149 Thomas Street	1846–52
149 ½ Thomas Street	1853
6 Thomas Street	1854–61

Between 1841 and 1848, Coyne shared premises with dealers, traders, hairdressers and the like, but from 1849 he was the sole tenant at his listed addresses.<sup>92</sup> The block containing 6 Thomas Street, on the corner of Crane Street, vacant in 1862, was demolished in 1863, which suggests that it was in bad shape. A grocery shop now stands on the corner, while both sides of Crane Street are occupied by Guinness' Brewery.

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<sup>90</sup> Thomas Wall, *At the Sign of Dr Hay's Head* (Dublin, 1958), pp 64-70, 104.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Seán Donnelly, 'Dublin pipemakers, the Coynes and Doogan', *An Piobaire* ii, 11 (Deireadh Fómhair 1981), 2.

There is no certain trace of Maurice Coyne after 1861; his documented career as a maker, then, was comparatively short, spanning just over twenty-two years. Unlike the Kennas, no evidence or tradition has survived that Maurice Coyne worked anywhere other than Dublin. He could have been making pipes before 1839, relying on word of mouth to spread his reputation: he would not have been the only pipemaker to leave no official trace behind him. But the feeling has always been that Maurice came after the younger Kenna, and that he was roughly contemporary with the famous Michael Egan.<sup>93</sup> And though Maurice was not the Coyne who actually took over Kenna's business, this does not rule out the traditional story that they were somehow connected, and that Coyne may have served his apprenticeship to Kenna.

The possibility that Coyne was quite old when first beginning to work under his own name in 1840 is raised by a death record from 1863. Coyne's last-known address was at 6 Thomas Street, on the corner of Crane Street, and on 21 December 1863, a Maurice Coyne, aged seventy-six, of 9 Crane Street, was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery.<sup>94</sup> This man lies in Grave no. MF 41 in the Garden Section of the cemetery, which he shares with several others unrelated to him; it is not a pauper's grave, however. The grave is still unmarked but can be located easily because a later infill burial on the right (looking down from the head of the grave) is numbered 'MF 41½' on its headstone.

Unfortunately the burial record does not mention any trade or profession that; such details only become common with later burials; so there is nothing to prove that this was the pipemaker other than the coincidence of time and place.<sup>95</sup> If this Maurice Coyne was the pipemaker, he would have been fifty-five when he officially began making under his own name. Nevertheless the possibility cannot be discounted that this man was a relative of the pipemaker's, his father, for instance, or an uncle. But were this so, no record of the pipemaker's own death in Dublin occurs between 1864, when

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<sup>93</sup> O'Neill, *Irish minstrels*, p. 160

<sup>94</sup> Letter dated 16 Feb. 1993 from the Secretary, Glasnevin Cemeteries Group).

<sup>95</sup> I am extremely grateful to Shane O'Shea, The FÁS Project, Glasnevin, for checking the entry for me.

compulsory registration of births, marriages and deaths was introduced in Ireland, and 1894. Two men named Maurice Coyne died in Dublin city in 1884; at thirty-three and thirty-four they neither could have been the pipemaker – though they could have been related to him. There is always the possibility that Coyne returned to co. Kildare, after retiring from the business in Dublin, and died there; but this remains to be investigated.

A possible hint that, by the mid-1850s Maurice was getting on in years is that one of his sons set up in business quite close to him. In 1855, ‘John Coyne, Maker of Union and Scotch Bagpipes’, appeared at 123 Thomas Street, disappearing in 1864. John was the best union piper in the family, and another son, Michael, an engine-driver on The Midland and Great Western Railway, played the Highland pipes.<sup>96</sup> John Coyne vanishes after 1864; he apparently gave up making pipes, at least officially, and seems to have moved from Thomas Street. The deaths of a number of men of that name are recorded in Dublin down to the 1890s, but in the absence of further details none can be identified as the pipemaker. That father and son were in competition so close to each other is unlikely, and even if they had fallen out, John might be expected to move away from Thomas Street, not to set up within a few hundred yards of his father’s own workshop. Perhaps John took over the business while Maurice continued to live at 6 Thomas Street, possibly incapacitated in some way. The general picture of a disastrous drop in the demand for pipes in the aftermath of the Famine (of which more below) makes it very unlikely that the Coynes were expanding their business in the late 1850s.

A considerable number of instruments the Coynes made have survived. On some sets a coronet surmounts the name; this occurs as well on flutes Coyne made; then again, some sets that are obviously by Coyne are unstamped. Again, there is a fair amount of diversity in the sets, as there was with Kenna. Many Coyne sets appear to have had an extended bass-regulator as a standard feature. There are some examples in the National Museum, Dublin, and early photographs of Séamus Ennis’s father, James Ennis (1884-1964), show that the Ennis Coyne pipes also had this feature. Intriguingly, though

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<sup>96</sup> NLI Ms 8118/2.

these pipes are probably the best-known Coyne set extant, the maker's name is not stamped anywhere on them.<sup>97</sup>

As previously mentioned, Timothy Kenna made a luxurious set for the 3rd Baron Rossmore, which is now in the possession of Garech de Brún. But Rossmore subsequently commissioned an even more luxurious set (according to descriptions) from Maurice Coyne, who stamped his address, '151 Thomas Street', on the instrument, thereby dating it to between 1841 and 1845.<sup>98</sup> This may have been the set that Rossmore lent to the 1853 Great Exhibition in Dublin as an example of Irish craftsmanship; it appeared alongside Lord Edward Fitzgerald's pipes, and a third set belonging to a 'Dr Morrison' of Dublin.<sup>99</sup> Rossmore may also have exhibited these pipes the previous year in Belfast, when the British Association for the Advancement of Science held their annual meeting there in 1852. An exhibition arranged for the occasion, mainly of Irish antiquities, also included a 'splendid set of Irish bagpipes in their most perfect form; made from materials exclusively Irish (comprising silver pearls and precious stones) and by Irish workmen.'<sup>100</sup> Neither the maker nor the owner of this 'splendid set' is named, but since Rossmore was an Ulster landowner and a highly cultured man, he would have been a very likely candidate for being the owner.

A presentation set Maurice Coyne made some years later at 149 Thomas Street was offered to the National Museum in 1927. A silver plate on the mainstock recorded that on 1 August 1850 the officers and men of the Dublin Metropolitan Police presented

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<sup>97</sup> I am obliged to Liam O'Flynn for this information.

<sup>98</sup> This set, owned by the present Lord Rossmore, is in bad condition, according to Jimmy O'Brien-Moran. The late Breandán Breathnach saw the chanter at the pipemaker Matt Kiernan's house in Cabra – I got the impression it was sometime during the 1960s – and described it as having carved ivory mounts and silver filigree inlay.

<sup>99</sup> Donnelly, 'Lord Edward Fitzgerald's pipes', 8; Richard Hitchcock, 'Notes made in the archaeological court of the Great Exhibition of 1853', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* ii (1852-3), 293.

<sup>100</sup> Breandán Ó Buachalla, *I mBéal Feirste cois cuain* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1968), p. 225.

these pipes to Denis Shaughnessy, formerly a sergeant in the force, who had been discharged in consequence of serious injuries suffered on duty.<sup>101</sup> At least one set John Coyne made has survived and is now in Australia; it is stamped 'J. Coyne' on the wood of the mainstock and also bears the name 'H. Denis Morrison', possibly the 'Dr Morrison' previously mentioned.<sup>102</sup> Doubtless John Coyne also made some of the other surviving Coyne pipes, as there do seem to be some very basic differences between certain sets. More than once, a set has been identified as a Coyne product, but people have commented that it was not exactly like ones they had seen before.

Father and son both advertised that they made Highland pipes, as the Kennas did and the Taylor brothers of Drogheda.<sup>103</sup> Patrick Archer (1866-1947), from Oldtown, co. Dublin, famous under his pen-names 'Mac Fine Gall' and 'Fair Fingall', who played both union and Highland pipes, had a set of Coyne Highland pipes in his possession in 1899.<sup>104</sup> Archer is thought to have given their first lessons on the pipes to Thomas Ashe (1885-1917) and Éamonn Ceannt (1881-1916). As he taught at Corduff National School, Lusk, and founded the Lusk (Black Raven) Pipe Band in 1909.<sup>105</sup> Ceannt, who played the union and Highland pipes, was the principal driving force behind the first Dublin Pipers' Club (1900-14). In 1907 he quoted an old saying to the effect that the best union pipes (Egan's) were made in Liverpool, while the best Highland pipes (Coyne's) were made in Dublin, which sounds like something he could have heard from Archer.<sup>106</sup> The fact that the Coynes advertised that they manufactured Highland pipes implies that there was a demand for the instrument at that period, which was well before the official 'Irish warpipe revival', a phenomenon commencing in the Irish regiments of the British Army in the late 1880s.

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<sup>101</sup> NLI MS 5432.

<sup>102</sup> Geoff Wooff, 'A Coyne set in Australia', *An Píobaire* ii, 40 (Iúil 1988), 8.

<sup>103</sup> Breathnach, 'Pipers and piping in Louth', 133.

<sup>104</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 29 April 1899.

<sup>105</sup> Diarmuid Breathnach and Máire ní Mhurchú (eds.), *1882-1982: Beathaisnéis a thrí* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1992), p. 13.

<sup>106</sup> *The Limerick Leader*, 19 April 1907

As well as probably being related, the Kennas and the Coynes appear to have originated in the same general area – around Mullingar, co. Westmeath, and Carbury in north co. Kildare, which is close to the Westmeath border. Another pipemaker traditionally said to have come from Mullingar and to have also worked in Dublin was Colgan. Nothing is known of this man, apart from the claim that he was active from 1780, a date which, given the highly-developed form of his pipes, is probably a little too early.<sup>107</sup> No musical instrument maker surnamed Colgan is to be found in Dublin during the early nineteenth century; nor does any highly-skilled craftsman of that surname appear. What is intriguing about Colgan, however, is not that Mullingar should produce two pipemakers during the same general period, but that his workmanship bears a striking similarity to that of the Coynes': even experienced modern pipemakers have attributed pipes he made to them.<sup>108</sup>

As a surname 'Colgan' is more common than either 'Coyne' or 'Kenna', and was well known in the Mullingar area; that the maker was in some way related to the Kennas and Coynes is at least possible. Colgan's workmanship is as accomplished as that of the others, and he was obviously not an amateur who turned out a set or two in his spare time. Like several other pipemakers whose work has survived, Colgan seems destined to remain just a name, which is unfortunate given the quality of his pipes.

#### THE END OF AN ERA

In giving up making pipes, at least professionally, in 1864 or so, the last known of the Coynes, John, was joining a trend that saw practically all professional pipemaking cease within six years. There may have been a number of reasons for this collapse, but it is difficult not to see it as a consequence of the Great Famine of 1845-8. Besides the pipers who died and emigrated, the Famine deeply affected the survivors, and more than one observer commented on the atmosphere of desolation that hung over large

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<sup>107</sup> *An Píobaire* I, 8/9 (Eanáir 1972), 6.

<sup>108</sup> My thanks to Jim Dunne and Jimmy O'Brien-Moran, both proud owners of Colgan sets, for discussing this point with me.

parts of the country.<sup>109</sup> The long-established clerical antipathy to music and dancing appears to have become more intense in the post-Famine years, and to have had a greater effect in many areas of the country. Francis O'Neill frequently wrote of how the music and dancing in his native parish of Caheragh, Bantry, co. Cork, was suppressed, which left a deep and lasting impression on him, and he articulated the feelings of many of his fellow-musicians in America.<sup>110</sup>

Pipemaking is bound to have been a marginal business at the best of times, and it would have taken very little to tip the balance the wrong way. From the variation in the sets they made, Kenna and Coyne almost certainly made each individually. Only rarely can any two surviving Kenna or Coyne sets be said to be identical; most differ in various ways from each other, sometimes only slightly, sometimes radically. At an advanced level, this diversity may also have arisen through their tailoring instruments to their clients' requirements. It would be difficult to picture a leading piper of the day coming to one of the great nineteenth-century makers and buying a set off the shelf – even if that were possible. Such a client would have had a good idea of what he wanted in an instrument and, more often than not, a maker would have himself been a player and able to judge what would best display his client's abilities.

An outstanding piper playing an instrument by a particular maker was, of course, an excellent advertisement for that maker, and it would be easy to imagine that the player and maker would have discussed requirements and possibilities beforehand. (It may have been this type of co-operation which lay behind the claims of various players in the early nineteenth century to have improved the instrument.) Something of the symbiosis between maker and player is to be gleaned from the comments of the famous Michael

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<sup>109</sup> For comments made in 1848 by the scholar John O'Donovan, see Nollaig Ó Muraíle,

'Seán Ó Donnabhain', in Ruairí Ó hUiginn (eag), *Scoláirí Gaeilge*, Léachtaí Cholm Cille XXVII (Mágh Nuad, 1997), lch. 58.

<sup>110</sup> Nicholas Carolan, *The Harvest Saved: Francis O'Neill and Irish music in Chicago* (Cork, 1997), p. 24.

Egan on Patrick Flannery, a celebrated Galway piper who died at an advanced age in Brooklyn, New York, in 1855:

“I made his pipes in Liverpool. I made him a good instrument, and the right man got it. It made a great name for him and also for me. Until I made Flannery’s pipes, there was no more thought of my pipemaking than there was of Michael Mannion’s of Liverpool, or Maurice Coyne’s of Dublin.”<sup>111</sup>

Another instance where apparently Egan matched an instrument to a player is in the case of the Limerick piper Charles Ferguson. Catherine Hayes, the famous Irish soprano, also a native of Limerick, and a rival of Jenny Lind’s, chose Ferguson to accompany her on a tour of America and Canada in 1851. Ferguson left the tour in San Francisco and returned to New York, having earned enough money to commission from Egan, who had recently moved there from Liverpool, an unusually elaborate set of pipes, with a double bass regulator and various additional keys. The important point here is that Ferguson specialised in airs and slow music, to the exclusion of dance music, and used to supply the music for Mass at a Roman Catholic church in Brooklyn.<sup>112</sup> Obviously the additions and improvements in Ferguson’s instrument would have extended the range of harmonic possibilities available, and added greatly to the playing of slow music.<sup>113</sup>

But the type of instrument Egan made for Flannery and Ferguson, and the Kennas and Coynes for similar players (and for gentleman amateurs like Joseph Myles MacDonnell and Lord Rossmore), would have been very much the ‘carriage trade’ aspect of the business. Such commissions could only have been few and far between. The bulk of their work would have consisted of making instruments for the average player, both professional and amateur, and of maintaining and refurbishing existing sets of pipes. To estimate how many sets such a maker would (or could) produce under these

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<sup>111</sup> O’Neill, *Irish minstrels*, p 205.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 222-3.

<sup>113</sup> Alexander Duncan Fraser, *Some reminiscences and the bagpipe* (Falkirk, n. d [c. 1904?]), published a photograph of what he claimed were Ferguson’s pipes (following p. 252).

circumstances in a year is difficult. Presuming that he did nothing else, five or six seem possible in theory. In the interview previously alluded to, William Kennedy claimed to have made thirty sets of pipes in eight years, an average of three to four a year, which seems not to be an overly-exaggerated figure.<sup>114</sup>

Makers, though, then as now, are unlikely to have achieved a consistently steady rate of production. We should bear in mind as well that the working day in winter is likely to have been much shorter: oil lamps, for instance, would hardly have provided a sufficiently strong and steady light for a craftsman like a pipemaker to do much work by. It could be relevant that Kenna's workshop was on a riverside quay, with no buildings immediately opposite him to block the light. With the Coyne's, while Thomas Street is not exceptionally wide for a main thoroughfare in a city, James Street certainly is. In neither case were the makers working in narrow lanes or alleys, where light would have been restricted.

Neither do we know precisely how much a set of pipes cost at a particular time. In 1844 the cost was said to have been between £20 and £30,<sup>115</sup> and Francis O'Neill several times mentions sets of pipes that cost £10 and £20, and even mentions 'a £5 set of pipes' on occasion.<sup>116</sup> The Kerry piper Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin – the famous Mícheál Cumbá – paid £10 and traded in his own small instrument for a Michael Egan set while he was in America.<sup>117</sup> Tradition had it that John MacHale, archbishop of Tuam, spent £35 on the set he presented to Martin Moran, the blind piper of Louisborough, co. Mayo, a protégé of his who flourished in the early 1840s.<sup>118</sup> The elaborate sets made for the likes of Lord Rossmore were certainly more expensive. At the 1st Cork

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<sup>114</sup> MacLeod, 'William Kennedy', 21.

<sup>115</sup> Sir John Graham Dalyell, *The musical memoirs of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1844), p. 8.

<sup>116</sup> *Irish minstrels*, pp 208, 210, 296.

<sup>117</sup> Letter dated 10 April 1959 from Brother Gildas (Pádraig Ó Séaghdha) to Seán Reid, *An Píobaire I*, 2 (Meitheamh 1969), 8.

<sup>118</sup> Gertrude M. Horgan (ed.), James Berry, *Tales from the west of Ireland* (Dublin, 1966; pbk. ed., London, 1988), p. 23.

Industrial Exhibition (1852) Denis Harrington of Cork sold a luxury set he exhibited for £50.<sup>119</sup> The massive Vandeleur pipes the Moloney brothers of Kilrush, co. Clare, made for the son of a local landlord in the 1830s were said to have been valued at £100 at the time of making. The instrument became a financial albatross around the Moloneys' necks when their client (or his family) failed to honour the commission after an accident left him unable to play the pipes.<sup>120</sup> For the sake of comparison, between the 1830s and 1850s a Ruddell and Rose flute would have cost 8-9 guineas; an English concertina, hand-crafted and aimed at the top end of the market, would have cost sixteen guineas; a mass-produced Lachenal, 'a people's concertina', would have retailed for 2-3 guineas.<sup>121</sup>

Though Essex Quay was to decline in the course of the nineteenth century, it was a good location when the younger Kenna set up there. It was close to Dublin's central business district, which had been steadily moving eastward since the late eighteenth century, and the premises Kenna occupied had a rateable valuation in 1844 of £25, which would place it in the lower middle-class bracket. Other craftsmen also worked on Essex Quay, which indicates that it was an area of small, relatively comfortable businesses, including, as we have seen, number of other musical-instrument makers. But the Coynes worked in the west of the city, which had been decaying as the centre moved eastward. Thomas Street was on the verge of the Liberties, one of the poorest areas in Dublin since the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>122</sup> The Act of Union (1801) removed the Irish Parliament, thus losing the city all the spin-off benefits it had

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>120</sup> O'Neill, *Irish minstrels*, pp 158, 337; Séamas S. de Vál, *Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire Dhoire an Chuillinn: a shaol agus a shaothair* (An Daingean, 1997), lgh. 80-1.

<sup>121</sup> I am very grateful to Steve Chambers, MacNeill's Music Shop, Capel Street, Dublin, for this information.

<sup>122</sup> For the general poverty of the area during the Coynes' period there, see John Crawford, *St Catherine's Parish, Dublin, 1840-1910: portrait of a Church of Ireland community* (Maynooth, 1996).

enjoyed for centuries, and a severe decline set in after the boom caused by the Napoleonic wars of 1793-1815.

Whereas Kenna's neighbours were mainly skilled craftsmen, Maurice Coyne shared premises with the likes of provender dealers and hairdressers for the first nine years of his independent career. The Guinness brewery and the Power distillery dominated the area, and there were other breweries in the area. But the overwhelming bulk of the other businesses in or around Thomas Street were small and marginal ones catering to the poor, selling second-hand clothes and furniture, cheap meat and groceries. Others – tanners, victuallers and dairies (where cows would have been kept or driven in daily to supply fresh milk) – would have had unpleasant side-effects, not to mention the pollution emanating from the breweries and the distillery.<sup>123</sup> Earlier in the century there had been several slaughter-houses in the area, most notoriously in Crane Street, on the corner of which Maurice Coyne's workshop stood down to 1863, and where he may have died himself. As late as the 1940s and 50s there were still slaughterhouses and rendering plants in the general area, as well as piggeries, stables and cowsheds, where farmers, having sold the produce they had brought in to the local markets, would load up their carts with manure for the return journey.<sup>124</sup>

The 1850s and 60s saw other pipemakers give up as well. Around 1851 or 1852 Michael Egan left for New York from Liverpool, where he had settled in 1845, after brief periods spent in various places in Ireland. One tradition had it that Egan was brought to New York specially to make a set of pipes for Patrick Coughlan, then a promising young piper, who was to leave the United States for Australia on the outbreak of the American Civil War.<sup>125</sup> A less-edifying story was that Egan had to flee

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<sup>123</sup> Martin, 'Social geography of nineteenth-century Dublin', pp 181-2.

<sup>124</sup> Máirín Johnson, *Around the banks of Pimlico* (Dublin, 1985), pp 95 – 9.

<sup>125</sup> O'Neill, *Irish minstrels*, pp 159, 248.

Liverpool, having stabbed a client with a reamer.<sup>126</sup> But whatever his immediate motive for emigrating, since 1848 Egan would have seen stupendous numbers of poverty-stricken and fever-ridden Irish pour into Liverpool, the chief port of the Irish Sea and the principal embarkation point for the United States, and possibly he saw the writing on the wall for the practice of his craft in either Ireland or England.<sup>127</sup>

In 1860 Denis Harrington of Cork also gave up the business, having failed to make a living at it; he too is said to have emigrated to America, but quite a number of his sets have surfaced in Australia, which makes it possible that he went there instead.<sup>128</sup> A lesser-known maker (and reputedly an excellent piper), Michael Carolan of Drogheda, co. Louth, left for the United States in 1862. Some years later – in 1868 or else 1872 – the celebrated Taylor brothers of Drogheda followed Carolan. Staying at first in New York, they subsequently settled in Philadelphia, and were the mainstay of Irish piping and pipemaking in the United States until the 1890s.<sup>129</sup> Even a relatively minor figure such as Michael Doogan of Old Church Street, Dublin, who in 1863 (taking advantage of Maurice Coyne's going out of business?) had promoted himself from 'Turning Lathe Manufacturer' (1862) to 'Pipemaker', disappeared from official view in 1864. Doogan continued making and repairing union and Highland pipes down to the early 1880s – apparently one of the few to do so semi-professionally – but it significant that he seems to have considered advertising this worthless.<sup>130</sup>

In the absence of professional back-up, pipers themselves would have needed to be able to carry out minor repairs to their pipes and, most importantly, to make reeds. But the

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<sup>126</sup> idem., *Irish folk music: a fascinating hobby* (Chicago 1910). Rep. with intro. by Barry O'Neill (Darby, PA, 1973), p. x.

<sup>127</sup> Robert James Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, famine and emigration* (Oxford, 1996), pp 200-12.

<sup>128</sup> [Seán Donnelly], 'Denis Harrington of Cork', *An Píobaire* ii, 30 (Bealtaine 1986), 2; Geoff Woof, 'Denis Harrington, pipemaker', *An Píobaire* ii, 33 (Eanáir 1987), 6-7.

<sup>129</sup> Breathnach, 'Pipers and piping in Louth', 133.

<sup>130</sup> Donnelly, 'Dublin pipemakers', 2.

bulk of professional players were blind, and how they would have fared is impossible to say. There is evidence that some, while technically classified as blind, had limited vision at close quarters, and may thus have been able to make reeds, and carry out routine maintenance.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, one blind piper could play ‘The Joys of Wedlock’ with more reason than most: his wife’s marital and domestic virtues included making reeds. The names have survived of a handful of pipers, usually comfortably-off amateurs, who were able to repair and maintain pipes, and were willing to do so for their professional colleagues. Such amateurs would not have been in direct competition with professionals, and the fact that their skills were considered worth noticing could be a hint that these repairers and reedmakers were few.<sup>132</sup> It should not be forgotten, either, that carpenters and blacksmiths were highly-skilled craftsmen capable of making a wide variety of artefacts, who would have been well able to repair pipes if needed.

It was to be the late 1890s and early 1900s before professional pipemaking got underway again in Ireland. The founding of pipers’ clubs in Cork (1898-9) and Dublin (1900) created a demand for new instruments and for the refurbishment of old ones. (Subsequently pipers’ clubs were also founded in various other parts of Ireland, but almost invariably these were pipe bands.) Two professional makers came to prominence at this time, both from Protestant stock and the sons of comfortable farmers who were also pipers. One was William Rowsome (1870-1925) of Ballintore, Ferns, co. Wexford, one of three piping sons of Samuel Rowsome (1826-1916), who had learned his piping from the Carlow piper Jem Byrne of Shangarry (d. 1867).<sup>133</sup> Wexford appears to have been one of the few areas in the country at this date in which

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<sup>131</sup> Stephen Ruane (d.1937) from Shantalla, co. Galway, though technically classified as blind, had sufficient sight to enable him to make reeds, and could walk without a stick (Jackie Small, ‘Memories of Stephen Ruane, Galway piper’, *An Píobaire* I, 27 (Iúil 1976), 5.

<sup>132</sup> For some examples, see Breandán Breathnach, ‘Séamas Goodman, bailitheoir ceoil’, *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological Society* vi (1973), 152–171, and Seán Donnelly, ‘A Galway gentleman piper’, *Seán Reid Society Journal* i (CD 1999), track 8.

<sup>133</sup> O’Neill, *Irish minstrels*, pp 260-1, 297; [Anon.], ‘A famous Carlow family of Irish pipers’, *Carloviana* xxx (1938), 9, 57.

piping was apparently in a fairly healthy state. Professional pipers were highly respected and received a warm welcome, and the example of Samuel Rowsome and other 'strong' farmers indicates that the pipes were still a 'respectable' instrument to play.<sup>134</sup>

William Rowsome served his time as a carpenter and, not surprisingly, began to make reeds and repair pipes for his neighbours. Towards the end of the 1890s William settled in Dublin, taking to pipemaking full time c. 1900, and founding a dynasty of pipers and pipemakers. (At some point, probably on marriage, he converted to Roman Catholicism.) In his advertisements William claimed to have been in business since 1895. However, this date probably referred to when he began repairing and making pipes at home in co. Wexford, rather than to his setting up as a professional maker. He could hardly have taken up making professionally in Dublin before the advent of the Dublin Pipers' Club, which was proposed in June 1899 and actually founded in February 1900. Up to that point there would not have been more than four or five pipers in Dublin, barely a sufficient number to keep a pipemaker in business full-time. William and his brother, Thomas, played major roles in the Dublin Pipers' Club, which would not have survived through its first phase without William's skills, and both brothers were involved in the efforts made to revive the club in the 1920s. These efforts were unavailing, but when the club was revived in 1936 Leo Rowsome was the main instigator, and remained strongly identified with it down to his death in 1970.

But the first man to actually advertise his services as a professional pipemaker, in Cork in April 1899, had a longer piping pedigree than William Rowsome. He was Richard Lewis O'Mealy (1873-1947), 'Dick Melia' to his neighbours in Templecross, Ballinacargy, co. Westmeath, the fourth generation of his family to play and (to a certain extent) make the pipes. His great-grandfather Thomas, from Kiltimagh, co. Mayo, settled in Templecross as bailiff to a local landlord, probably while the Kennas were still in Mullingar. A set of Kenna pipes that had belonged to this man's grandson,

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<sup>134</sup> O'Neill, *Irish minstrels*, pp 217-221, 297-305.

Larry (1819-1903), Richard O’Mealy’s father, was still in existence in co. Longford in the early 1960s.<sup>135</sup>

Though O’Mealy was a great boon to the Cork Pipers’ Club, it was only for a comparatively short period. In the early 1900s he left Cork city to settle in Belfast, where he continued to make pipes up to the time of his death, as well as playing and, when the BBC opened a station in Belfast, broadcasting regularly. Down to about 1912-13 O’Mealy played frequently at Gaelic League functions in Belfast and throughout Ulster; but thereafter his name ceases to appear on the programmes of these happenings. His withdrawal may have been due to the changes and upheavals in the Gaelic League during the years 1912-13 which alienated many Protestants sympathetic to cultural but not political nationalism.<sup>136</sup>

William Rowsome appears to have been the first maker in twentieth-century Ireland to manufacture the modern wide-bore, concert-pitch chanter.<sup>137</sup> The Taylor brothers of Drogheda and Philadelphia are credited with developing this type of chanter in the United States during the 1870s and 80s to suit professional pipers playing in music-halls and other spacious venues. It is, however, claimed that the Taylors had made a few of

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<sup>135</sup> Murray and Finnerty, *Traditional Irish music in County Westmeath*, [p. 7].

<sup>136</sup> I hope to deal with the early years of the Cork Pipers’ Club, including O’Mealy’s connection with it elsewhere.

<sup>137</sup> *Programme of the Pipers’ Concert in the Gaelic League Hall, 25 Parnell Square, Dublin, Saturday, 23rd of May 1914*. A note in this programme says of the trio performance on the pipes of Messrs. Andrews, Deegan and O’Farrell that ‘the chanters used were made in Dublin by Mr. Wm. Rowsome, of Harold’s Cross, and are specially intended for large halls and for playing for dancing.’ The wording would suggest that these chanters were an innovation, and they are not referred to in earlier programmes.

these new-style chanters before leaving Drogheda *c.* 1870.<sup>138</sup> When Leo Rowsome succeeded his father in 1925, his concert-pitch pipes and chanters became almost the standard type and very much remain so. But while his father did make the older low-pitched flat pipes and chanters, Leo himself appears to have made few of these. In contrast O’Mealy seems to have made few concert-pitch pipes and chanters, preferring to produce flat sets. He, too, had a Taylor connection in that he made his regulator keys in the flat ribbon-pattern the brothers pioneered in the United States, and folded the top of the bass-regulator, which normally projects out over the player’s bag-arm, back along the mainstock. For his chanter-keys O’Mealy retained the traditional tear-drop shape and placing, whereas the key-arrangements on many Taylor chanters are marvels of miniature engineering.

A high compliment was paid to O’Mealy’s pipes in 1912 by Michael Flanagan of Kilmainham, Dublin, originally a native of Carbury, co. Kildare. Flanagan, a retired army-schoolmaster and also a scholar in Oriental languages, corresponded with Francis O’Neill and frequently published letters on piping in Dublin newspapers, sometimes under the pen-name ‘The Oldest Piper in Dublin.’<sup>139</sup> On 3 August 1912 *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the Gaelic League newspaper, carried a letter from Flanagan in response to a report by Séamus Ó Casaide, secretary of the Dublin Pipers’ Club, in the same paper on 13 July. Ó Casaide had given an account of the tea-party which the Dublin Pipers’ Club had given in Groome’s Hotel, Cavendish Row, on 2 July for the pipers (seventeen in all) who had competed that day at the Oireachtas in the nearby Rotunda.

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<sup>138</sup> Breandán Breathnach, ‘Reverend Brother Gildas’, *An Píobaire* I, 2 (Meitheamh 1969), 7. The statement that the Taylors had already begun making these chanters in Ireland came from Jack Wade (d. 1968), a native of north county Dublin. A customs officer based in co. Monaghan, Wade collected a good deal of local music and snippets of historical information throughout the north Leinster/south Ulster area. No doubt Wade was passing on a local tradition.

<sup>139</sup> O’Neill, *Irish minstrels*, pp 315, 317.

In the course of his article, Ó Casaide had stated that Jem Byrne (1868-1932) from Mooncoin, co. Kilkenny, had ‘played very well on a set which contains little more than a bag, bellows and chanter made by the Rev. Dr. Henebry’s brother, ...’. Flanagan pointed out in his letter that Ó Casaide was mistaken as to the maker of Byrne’s instrument: ‘Conjecturing from the highly-superior tone of Byrne’s chanter that it is an old one, I made enquiry, and I have learned on unimpeachable authority it is indeed a “Kenna” chanter’. He continued:

Yet would-be learners and intending purchasers of new pipes may take comfort. The brand new set played on by Francis McPeake, of Belfast, was markedly superior to any other set – old or new – heard at Groome’s Hotel on the evening of the 2nd ins. The chanter was all that could be desired, and my friend, Tom Kenny, agreed that we had never heard in pipes any tones to equal those produced by McPeake’s regulators. The maker of that set of pipes should advertise.<sup>140</sup>

McPeake was playing an O’Mealy set, and at the tea-party had sung to his own accompaniment, a practice once common enough among pipers that had died out. As we have seen, the maker of his pipes had indeed advertised his services, in April 1899, and in doing so could be said to have closed a circle. One hundred and twenty-nine years earlier James Keena/Kenna – perhaps a native of the area – had advertised his own services from Ballinacargy, opening an epoch in pipemaking that was to last approximately a century. Then, in 1899, after a gap of thirty or forty years in professional making, a native of Ballinacargy, with musical roots in the area going back at least a century, was launching himself on the same career, the harbinger of a new era in pipemaking that has continued so far, with some early ups and downs, for more than a century.

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<sup>140</sup> The Ó Casaide article and the Flanagan letter are both reprinted in Seán Donnelly, ‘Seanchas’, *An Píobaire* iii, 21 (January 1995), 21-3.

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