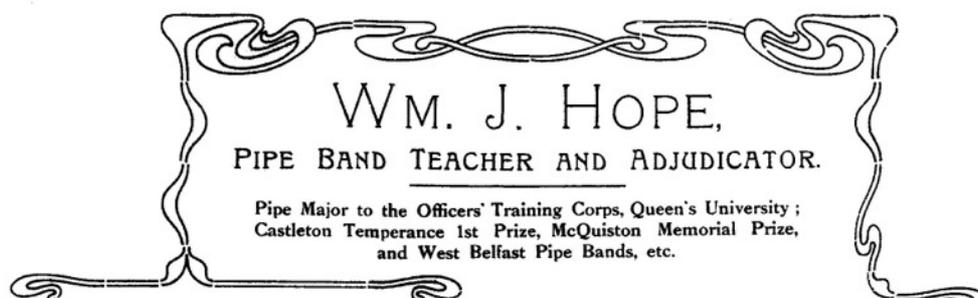


William Hope (1880 - 1959)**Ken McLeod****With corrections and important updated information. April 2014.**

William John Hope was born in the town land of Ballylagan, between Ballynure and Carrickfergus, in Co Antrim on February 29, 1880. His father was John, a labourer who marked an 'X' sign on William's birth certificate. His wife was Catherine (nee White) and they were married in Cliftonville Road Presbyterian Church, Belfast on October 31, 1900. Both WJ and Catherine's father are noted as 'Ironers.' When his sister Margaret Jane was born in 1883, John, their father is recorded as being a grocer and living in Ballyfore, Raloo in the same area. His Mother died in 1914 and John Hope is recorded as a labourer again but now living in Ballyrickardmore, Raloo. WJ Hope's family were Presbyterian and living in an area which is considered to have been and remains at least among the older folk, Ulster Scots territory since the Jacobite Plantation. The United Irishmen were strong here and it seems that WJ was showing some pride in making sure that his children knew they were descended from 'Jemmy' Hope one of the best remembered of those who took part in the '98.

Little else is known of WJ in his earlier life until sometime before 1911 when he was living at a house named 'Gorteen' on King's Road, Belfast which some time later became number eight. There were five children in the family at this time; Jane aged nine, Wilhelmina aged eight, James aged six, Francis aged two and Martha aged eight months. .

It would appear that WJ must have known Francis Joseph Bigger, the famous cultural revivalist and collector from before 1909 when his son Francis Joseph Bigger Hope was born. This son was better known as Frank for the rest of his life and became a highly respected champion and teacher of the Great Highland Pipe. As we have seen R.L. O'Mealy had been quite close to Bigger in those times so the possibility that R.L. and WJ were already well known to each other is reasonably certain. I would surmise that WJ was already an accomplished highland piper at this time and so was very probably taking an interest in the Union pipes. As will be seen he had also learned the craft of joinery in his pre-Belfast life and very possibly moved to Belfast to primarily work in the trade but by around 1910 he was definitely quite busy teaching the highland pipes to quite a few bands.



GORTEEN,
KING'S ROAD, KNOCK.

Belfast, 191

An interesting note is that in the 1907 street directory the householder at ‘Gorteen’ on the King’s Road was a ‘Mrs Bigger.’ It is perhaps a coincidence but ‘Bigger’ is not a very common name. The renowned F.J. Bigger however lived at ‘Ardreigh’ a house on the Antrim Road, since demolished.

The first I ever heard of William Hope was from Wilbert Garvin when he told me of the old-time local players he had heard of in the Belfast area. It was not long after my introduction to the instrument that I got to know Davy Mawhinney, fiddler and fiddle maker of Dunadry, Co Antrim a founder member of the Antrim and Derry Fiddlers Association.

I was introduced to Davy by Fergus Henderson of the Armagh Piper’s Club who had taken up the pipes at virtually the same time as myself in 1975. After several visits Davy gave me some pictures which I passed on to Na Píobairí Uilleann for the archive. These were probably taken in William Hope’s garden on King’s Road, Belfast sometime during the fifties. Leo Rowsome was also a visitor possibly on the same day.



At left; Davy Mawhinney and WJ Hope. Davy told me little about WJ which I remember except that they had lost contact several years before he died. I was never aware of just how well he knew him or perhaps I simply did not ask the right question! We certainly know now that William Hope played at Antrim and Derry Fiddlers meetings at times.¹ Most who knew him called him ‘Billy’ but his pupils at Cabin Hill prep school knew him as ‘Da Hope.’

With the decision to dedicate volume three of the journal to Richard Lewis O’Mealy, it became obligatory for some further research to be carried out on his pupils and players of the instruments he had made. WJ, on the right in these pictures, is playing a set of pipes which had been made by and which O’Mealy possibly used as his performance set at one time. Ronan Browne noticed

recently that the set in these pictures is very similar to those photographed with RL in the 1930’s but slightly different to those which appear in later pictures. It is possible that O’Mealy sold this set on to Hope and made himself another set of virtually the same pattern.

¹ This poem follows later in the article.

The Seán Reid Society Journal. Volume 3. 2009 3.16.6

Among the O'Mealy papers in the NPU archive are two pages one of which is notes on 'Hope's Middle Drone' and the other 'Hope's Tenor Drone.'

Sadly we missed an opportunity to talk with Jim McIntosh about Billy Hope. Jim must have known quite a lot about him and possibly others of whom we know even less.



William and his wife Cassie (Catherine nee White) with the dog and family (except Jim) at the Gate Lodge Campbell College in 1919. Front row from left are Meta, Frank and Sadie. Mina is seated and Jane standing at the rear.

It is a hurtful fact to have to mention Belfast / Ulster problems but in order to give a clearer view of the times I find it necessary. The religious divide has played a part in the North of Ireland's history going back long before the Union pipes emerged. For example, two of O'Mealy's pupils, Jack O'Rourke and Jim McIntosh came from backgrounds of the strongest and most opposing kind. Jack from the republican Falls Road and Jim from the loyalist Shankill Road. They remained friends for life but their friendship was virtually kept secret. After O'Mealy died and Jim McIntosh bought his tools he was living in the Donegal Road area, another strong loyalist district. After a year or two he sold them on to Seán Reid in Ennis. Jack O'Rourke was the go-between who arranged this and I clearly remember Jack telling me that the matter had to be kept quiet. Both Jack and Jim had considerable concerns as to how their neighbours might react to such an alliance. Sad but true.

This type of unfortunate attitude might help explain why Jack and Seán McAloon, to name but two Belfast pipers, never even met Billy Hope and knew only of his existence as far as we know. I must say that it is particularly hard to believe that Jack in particular did not know Billy. It is also difficult for me to believe that William Hope did not attend RL's funeral but we can be quite sure that this was the case from Farrar family recollections!

As Jim McIntosh told us² there were very many pipe bands on the Shankill Road, he actually said that almost every street had their own. The instrument being the Highland pipes of course. Highland pipers on the Shankill Road seemed to have known about RL and after taking up and playing the Highland instrument saw the 'uilleann' pipes, as acceptable because of the religious background of the maker and teacher. In fact the vast majority of the persons RL made pipes for and taught to play were of Protestant background.

His time teaching the OTC (Officer's Training Corps) at Queen's University was most likely prior to or during WW1. WJ became piping instructor at Campbell College in 1916 and probably moved into the tiny gate-house of the school at that time.

For some time beginning in the twenties WJ ran a specialist bagpipe shop on the Shankill Road, somewhere near to Agnes street which gives one a clear feeling for the very serious interest in bag-piping which existed there between the wars.

Trevor Stewart tells us that Jim McIntosh had mentioned to him that WJ taught the pipe band at Campbell College, a highly respected public school in Belfast, I wrote to the school to ask if they could give me any information on him and received a response from the school archivist Keith Haines who kindly supplied us with several interesting pieces of information. Unfortunately as Hope was not a member of school staff (he was termed an instructor) there is little in the way of information held by the school. From an obituary in the school magazine however we have learnt that he taught the Highland pipes there from 1916 to 1959. WWII Lancaster pilot Miles Delap³ was also a pupil at Campbell College and was obviously taught the Highland pipes there by WJ. Perhaps WJ introduced Miles to the uilleann pipes and possibly Miles to O'Mealy.

'Billy' Hope was in his gate-lodge home in the Campbell College grounds on 27 December 1935 (with his wife, a daughter and two grand-children) when it was raided by the IRA looking for the school rifles. Three armed IRA men entered his very small home, followed by an armed policeman. The Hope family had been lined up against the wall; a gun-fight followed, and the Hope family were extremely lucky that none of them was injured or killed!

² See 3.16.4 'Jim McIntosh.'

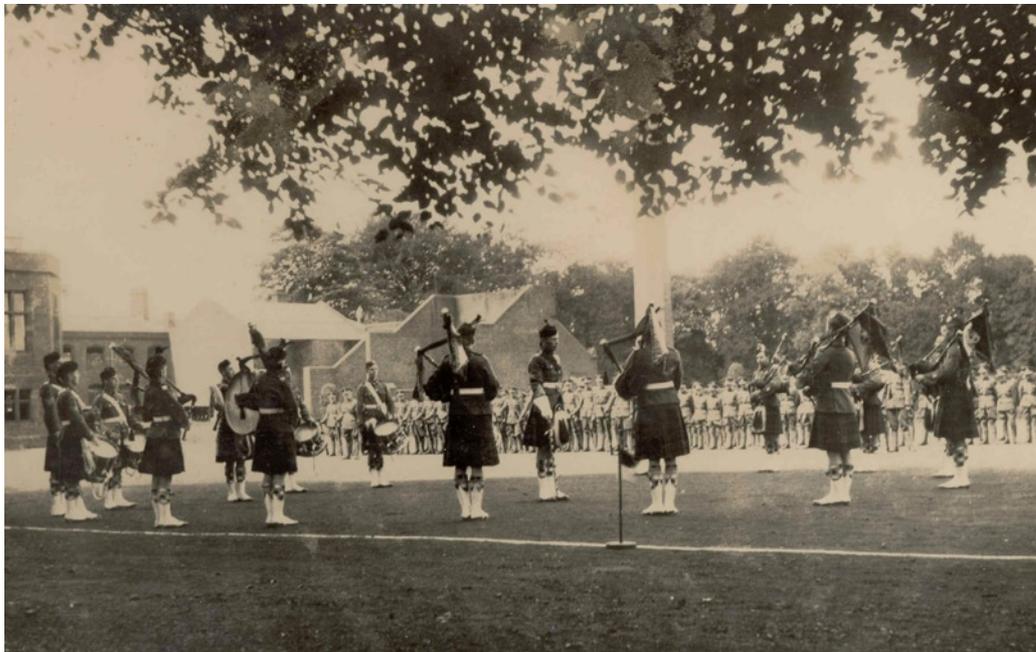
³ See 3.16.3 'Miles Delap.'

The Seán Reid Society Journal. Volume 3. 2009 3.16.6

Keith Haynes informed us of this quotation from the Belfast Telegraph and interestingly adds: *the unnerving fact is that, although the police and the school authorities were well aware that the raid was going to take place, no-one ever forewarned Billy Hope and his family! The event made a big splash in the local press.*

The gate-lodge was on Hawthornden Road and in the summer of 1940 the school was requisitioned by the military authorities as a General Hospital. However it seems that WJ and family possibly continued living there as he continued working at the college prep school, Cabin Hill, teaching woodwork during the wartime.

The only reference to WJ Hope, apart from an obituary appearing in the school magazine (The Campbellian) appears in March 1940, which offers sympathy to him on an unspecified bereavement. It was very probably on the death of his first wife 'Cassie' who died on December 15, 1939.



Campbell College Pipe Band is shown above in 1930. 'Billy' Hope was teaching the band at this time. Reproduced by the kind permission of Campbell College.



He had six children, two boys and four girls in his first marriage and married for the second time in his late sixties and had another son and daughter with a much younger wife. The boy was also named William (Billy).

In the 1990's Billy's son, William John, was a pupil at Campbell College and like his father was a piper in the school band and Pipe Major in his final year.

This cutting at left was given by Cecil Colville to Wilbert Garvin during the time of his interview for this journal.

The Seán Reid Society Journal. Volume 3. 2009 3.16.6

The origin is the periodical 'Farmer and Stock-breeder', February 24-25, 1953. If the picture was taken at that time he would have been 73 years old. He never lived in Dunmurry so perhaps that was simply the venue for this event.

Cecil also told Wilbert for this journal that he knew WJ Hope from about 1950 and met him at a 'fiddlin' do'. Cecil mentioned that WJ, as he called him, also played the 'Scottish' pipes and trained Ballykeel Pipe Band, Moneyrea among many others. *'His son Frank took over and trained a lot of them, particularly in Co. Down. Frank was a good Highland piper. WJ used to come down to Davy Mawhinney's. I played often with WJ'*⁴

Frank taught Portavogie Pipe band from its formation after the Second World War. Records show that they competed for the first time in the Junior Section of The North of Ireland Bands Association, in November 1948. During the sixties his twin daughters, his nephew and his half brother Billy junior, all played along side him in Portavogie.

Traditional singer and collector Len Graham was able to add a few pieces of great interest when I contacted him after NPU had published his letter and one of the photographs given to me by Davy Mawhinney of 'Willie' Hope and Leo Rowsome in *An Píobaire*, Number 2, Volume 5 in 2009. Len's father, who was a friend of Billy's and Davy's took Len as a young boy in the 'fifties' to hear them playing together. Len recalled seeing a poem in his father's papers concerning an Antrim & Derry Fiddlers night in the 1950s and in which Billy Hope got a mention. William and Davy plus Mickey McIlhatton, Alec Kerr and others were the founding members and William was also possibly a founding member of CCE at Mullingar in 1953. That should be easily verified. He also tells us that Hope claimed to be a direct descendent of Jemmy Hope of 1798 fame.

O'Mealy was before Len's time of course but he heard him talked about by the old timers in his youth and recalled that Richard played in Glenarm at the old courthouse in the twenties and thirties. I could not help but wonder if this could have been the time when Netta Jane Johnson heard the pipes and got to know O'Mealy?

Len later found the poem among his father's collection and is reprinted here.

The Antrim and Derry Fiddlers

*There's a group of fine musicians, who fill my heart with pride,
The Antrim and Derry Fiddlers, may blessings on them bide;
They keep alive within our hearts our Irish music rare,
Those haunting old traditional tunes, that banish all our care.*

*From Antrim, Derry and Tyrone, and parts of Eire too,
And no spiked roads could hold them back, with a Fiddlers' Night in view;
Teachers, farmers, joiners, are to mention but a few,
All meet to bow with style and grace, our Irish music true.*

⁴ See 3.12 'Cecil Colville.'

The Seán Reid Society Journal. Volume 3. 2009 3.16.6

*Oh! what a treat to sit and watch some thirty men or more,
All fiddling in perfect time, while our feet tap on the floor;
Jigs and reels and hornpipes too, some names I can recall -
The Millar's, Sligo Fancy and of course old Lannigan's Ball.*

*For a little recreation, on the platform you will find,
Our good friend Willie Nicholl, who is never short of wind,
He can sing a song or spin a yarn, and if he gets the call,
He will tootle on his whistle like a blackbird on a wall.*

*Sam and Sheena Heffron, whose singing is a treat,
Of good old Irish ballads, the like you could not beat.
The fiddlers strive with all their might to keep old tunes alive,
For while there beats an Irish heart, her music will survive.*

*At concerts run for charities, you are sure to find them there,
Each bow is plied with right good will, all led by Alex Kerr.
The spice of life's variety, and once again they cope,
The uilleann pipes so ably played by our good friend William Hope.*

*I cannot mention all by name, I'm sure you will agree,
Most praise is due to their Chairman, Mr. Hugh McKee.
So blessings on you fiddlers all, wherever you may go,
May you never lack a pipe or glass or rosin for your bow;
May your fiddles sweet make dancing feet, as your songs the welkin rings,
With money in your pockets, boys, to buy a set of strings.*

*C.J. Agnew
Donegore, Dunadry, Co. Antrim. April, 1958.*

Len went on to say something we probably all regret in one way or another.

Well Ken there it is warts and all! I'm not sure what 'welkin rings' means, but that is how it appears?

I don't know if C.J. Agnew is male or female and anyone who could answer that are all pushing up the daisies!

Thanks again for the lovely photos - pity my Dad wasn't alive I would have heard some wonderful memories.

Obituary from the 'Cambellian.'⁵

"By the death of Pipe Major William Hope there was ended an association with the school which has lasted 43 years. He came here as Instructor to the Band in the

⁵ *The Campbellian*, Vol.14 no.9 (July 1959), p.691. This is reproduced with the permission of the school and archivist Mr Keith Haines to whom we are very grateful.

The Seán Reid Society Journal. Volume 3. 2009 3.16.6

Easter term of 1916. On the death of Mr Shearman he was appointed Woodwork Instructor and entered on his duties in the Christmas term of that same year.

In 1940, when we were forced into exile at Portrush, he transferred to full-time work at Cabin Hill [Campbell's Prep School]. He never lost his enthusiasm for the Band and continued as Instructor in the Pipes up to a few weeks of his death. He demanded a very high standard of production and performance and few dared risk his wrath by shoddy output.

He has left a fine memorial here in the standard of the Band. Many former pipers will remember him with gratitude. Those of us who knew him regret the passing of a kindly man who was a friend to all".



Not only did WJ help his two sons Frank and Jim to start their own building company which traded as Hope Bros he also independent of them, built houses in various areas of Belfast. As he still had his full-time teaching job this would have been in the role of what to day is known as a "property developer". He built himself a new house on Kings Road and Frank built one for himself next door. WJ died on 20th March 1959 and both he and Frank, who died on 1st July 1988, are buried in Dundonald Cemetery, East Belfast.

To the left is WJ in front of his house at King's Road

Appendix.

R.L. O'Mealy's notes on two of William Hope's drones.

Hopfe Middle Drone

to wood below frame
 $\frac{1}{16} + \frac{1}{32}$

Full length including ivory is $11\frac{3}{16}$ feet of 2.

Base here including the ivory

The frame $4\frac{3}{8}$ long 1

$\frac{1}{2}$ diameter (hole) $\frac{1}{32}$

Top of Hopfe Middle Drone

The $\frac{1}{32}$ drill fits in about $1\frac{1}{8}$ beyond the end of the frame + the remainder of hole including the ivory is $\frac{13}{64}$ good - loose

The $\frac{1}{32}$ drill goes down a little at the + place + the rest of the is $\frac{13}{64}$ full

Quantity of wood at ivory $\frac{1}{16} + \frac{1}{32}$

$1\frac{3}{8}$
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ open stock

Diameter under head $\frac{1}{16}$

Hopfe Butt piece of middle drone

$4\frac{3}{32}$ light

$\frac{3}{16}$ thick head. + line each side of head

$\frac{1}{16}$ includes head + hole

The bone is $\frac{5}{32}$ drill loose + at tuning end is tapered - the $\frac{1}{32}$ drill goes in

$$\begin{array}{r} 1\frac{3}{8} \\ 4\frac{1}{32} \\ 5\frac{3}{32} \\ \hline 11\frac{3}{32} \end{array}$$

Hopfe Tenor

Frame $2\frac{3}{8}$ light. Full length of top $3\frac{1}{2}$ 4 including ivory

x diameter of wood meeting ivory is $\frac{1}{2}$ light.

Diameter the frame is $\frac{1}{2}$ C. The bone is $\frac{5}{32}$ full good the $\frac{1}{16}$ would not fit

The nose of the press about $\frac{1}{8}$ beyond end of frame, in bone

$\frac{1}{2}$ good

Hopfe Tenor Butt piece Full length of Butt is $3\frac{5}{8}$ C.

Diameter below head $\frac{1}{16}$ for $\frac{1}{32}$ hole + diameter a shade thicker below till near lower head

$2\frac{7}{32}$

Diameter above little head is about $\frac{15}{32}$

Bone in Butt is $\frac{1}{8}$ under grill on till it comes down into the tuning portion + the tuning portion is tapered to $\frac{1}{32}$. $\frac{1}{32}$ drill falls tuning portion easily



L to R. Leo Rowsome, Davy Mawhinney, William J. Hope at King's Road.

William 'Billy' Hope, son of WJ who supplied the very welcome and informative following addition bringing at least temporary closure to this important piece of piping history after many years of wondering and research.

Memoirs of my father William Hope.

William Hope.

A lot of work has been done in compiling information on my father. I hope this information will add to what is already known and might also answer some questions.

William John Hope was born on 29th February 1880 the only son to John and Jane (*nee* Hoey). He had two sisters Margaret Jane (Meg) and Mary. From the time I knew them in the early 50s Auntie Mary lived on the Circular Road, Larne and Auntie Meg on the Hillhead Road, Ballyclare. I know nothing about my Father's childhood or early years except to confirm that it was in County Antrim that he learnt the Highland Pipes. In 1901, the year after he was married, he and his wife were lodging at 67 Hogarth Street in the Duncairn area of Belfast. In 1903 they lived at 37 Vicarage Street off the Albertbridge Road and by 1907 had moved to 42 Parker Street off the Newtownards Road. From 1909 they were living at Gorteen on the Kings Road where they remained until moving in 1917/18 to the Gate Lodge of Campbell College. He moved from the Gate Lodge at Campbell to 66 Cabin Hill Gardens in 1941/42 and then in 1947 returned to live once again on the Kings Road.

*At camp with Queens OTC*

Throughout his life he taught many bands and when he died he was still teaching Gilnahirk Pipe Band, Star Of Eden Pipe Band, Ballykeel Pipe Band and both Queens OTC and Campbell College Pipe Bands.

I have over the years met many people whom he taught and was told that although Frank was the better player my Father was the better teacher. The surprising thing is that I have met more people who associated him as being a highland piper and it would only have been the odd person in the highland-piping world who talked about his uilleann piping. The only notable exception to this is when in 1969 I met Norman Dodds who was then Pipe Major of The Royal Irish Rangers. He was aware of Frank but remembered as a young boy hearing my Father play the uilleann pipes and from the talk of his elders had always assumed he was a uilleann piper.

From 1921/22 his first wife Catherine had a Drapers shop at 169 Shankill Road. On a Saturday he used half the shop and one window to sell to the pipe band world. I was

once told by one of his daughters, Mina, who worked with her mother, that on many occasions the income from the piping side was greater than they would have made all week! His advertising slogan was “Don’t Hope For The Best, Come To Hope’s And Get It.”

On 27th August 1926, the first of three telegrams arrived at the shop. This was the year Frank competed in solo competitions in Scotland. The first was for the MSR competition in which he was second. The next on the 28th was for the under 18 Piobaireachd which he won. This was the first time the Inverchapel Shield left Scotland. The third on the 10th Sept was for a second prize at the Braemar Gathering. Frank told me that the only reason he did not go back to defend his win was because

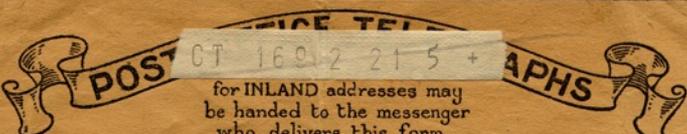


they (Scotland) took it so bad. I do not know if he was joking or serious. When you look at the past winners of the Inverchapel Shield, both before and since, you begin to realise just how good he was. His win at that time was unprecedented and probably in the eyes of his Scottish counterparts unobtainable for someone outside Scotland. Frank was taught his piping by his Father but was taught piobaireachd by the Pipe Major of a Scottish Regiment stationed in Palace Barracks, Holywood. When this regiment left they were replaced by another Scottish Regiment and arrangements were made for Frank’s tutoring to continue. It was Pipe Major Haywood of the 1st Seaforth Highlanders who then taught Frank and what he told

me was “*he really put me through it*”. Frank’s solo piping career continued until the 1940s. Throughout his solo career he competed in and won all the major solo competitions in Ireland.

B or C			No. 1554
Charges to pay s. d.			Office Stamp BELFAST 27 AU 26
This form, and if possible the envelope, should accompany any enquiry respecting this Telegram.			
The Post Office accepts telegrams by telephone.			
RECEIVED	Prefix.	Time handed in.	Office of Origin & Service Instructions. Words.
At..... M		299 4.30	DUNOON 17 =
From.....			
By.....			
SENT			
At..... M			
To.....			
By.....			
HOPE 169 SHANKHILL RD BELFAST =			
HIGHLAND GAMES DUNOON FRANCIS BIGGER HOPE 2 ND			
IN PIPING COMPETITION 13 COMPETITOR :			

B or C			No. 620
Charges to pay s. d.			Office Stamp BELFAST 28 AU 26
This form, and if possible the envelope, should accompany any enquiry respecting this Telegram.			
The Post Office accepts telegrams by telephone.			
RECEIVED	Prefix.	Time handed in.	Office of Origin & Service Instructions. Words.
At..... M		162 12.14	DUNOON 18
From.....			
By.....			
SENT			
At..... M			
To.....			
By.....			
HOPE 169 SHANKILL RD BELFAST =			
PIBROCH CHAMPIONSHIP OF SCOTLAND UNDER 18 WON BY			
FRANCIS BIGGER HOPE DUNOON GAMES +			

B or C	 <p>for INLAND addresses may be handed to the messenger who delivers this form.</p> <p>The Post Office accepts telegrams by telephone.</p>	No. 831
Charges to pay s. d.		Office Stamp BELFAST 10 SR 26
This form, and if possible the envelope, should accompany any enquiry respecting this telegram.	Prefix. Time handed in. Office of Origin & Service Instructions. Words.	SENT At.....M
RECEIVED At.....M	83 12.36 ABERDEEN 19	To.....
From.....		By.....
By.....		

HOPE 169 SHANKILL RD BELFAST -

2 PRIZE BRAEMAR GATHERING UP TO AGE 21

= FRANCIS BIGGER HOPE +

The night the IRA attacked Campbell has been well documented. I was told the story by one of the grandsons who was in the house that night. The newspaper account is factual, to listen to someone who was actually there is another thing. My Father was sitting in a chair beside the fire reading the paper when a gunman burst into the house and ran into the kitchen closely followed by a policeman. A gun battle ensued across the tiny living room with one of the bullets passing close to my Father's head and lodging in the fireplace. The policeman, Constable Hay, was injured and initially tended to by Catherine Hope.

You have covered the obituary published in *The Campbellian*. The following, written by the then Headmaster S.W.V. Sutton, appeared in *The Junior Campbellian*⁶

WJ Hope

Cabin Hill has been fortunate in having on its staff men and women who have devoted their thoughts and their endeavours to the interests of the school. None has been more untiring in his efforts than "Da" Hope whose loss we mourn to-day.

Those parents who have been filled with admiration at his visible success with his boys in the Workshop on Father's Match Day will have some slight idea of his enthusiasm; but those of us who were fortunate to be his friends will know much better his deep loyalty and self-forgetfulness in the interests of the boys. The Workshop was open at the appointed times out-of-school for those boys who were keen on woodwork, but if any boy had not finished his model and asked "Da" Hope if he could come in at some unofficial time, the answer was always a glad and willing "yes" and there to help him, if he was in doubt, was his wise and skilled instructor.

⁶ *The Junior Campbellian* Vol. 8 No. 5, April 1959, page155

The Seán Reid Society Journal. Volume 3. 2009 3.16.6

Many boys who have been at Cabin Hill must treasure lamps or bookcases or other objects which they made at Cabin Hill and must take pride even to-day that no shoddy or slovenly finish was permitted in his Workshop. A deep sense of pride in craftsmanship was an abiding lesson he always taught. He took such a pride in his domain that if even a rule was missing from its appointed place at the end of the day, he never rested happy till it returned and such was the sense of pride and honour that he instilled in his boys that nothing was ever lost.

The Boarders' Feast at Cabin Hill at the end of the Christmas Term always ended with "Da" Hope playing the bag-pipes for which he was so well known far beyond the confines of Cabin Hill and, indeed, Northern Ireland. So to the accompaniment of cheers and dancing the Christmas Term ended – but never did he fail to pay a visit to the Sick Room afterwards to play a special tune for any sick boy in bed who had missed the Feast.

Such was the nature of the man whose life at Cabin Hill began the day the School opened and ended to-day – 30 years later.

Woodwork he may have officially taught but what we both young and old learnt from him was far more – loyalty, trust and a steadfast determination never to fail one's friends in thought, word or deed.

To Mrs. Hope and his family we offer our sincere sympathy in their grievous loss.

20th March, 1959.

S.W.V.S.

All teachers at Cabin Hill had nick names. My Father's was "Da" Hope. I have met Old Campbellians whom he taught to pipe and they always referred to him affectionately as "Da" Hope.

*Cabin Hill Workshop*

How did my Father and Davy Mawhinney meet? His grandson whistled as he worked! Both parties were working on the same job in Belfast and Davy wanted to know how the other knew these tunes. He was told “my Grandfather plays them on the uilleann pipes”. When his grandson recounted the story, my Father told him to invite Davy to visit and that is how the friendship started. My memories are of a Saturday night with the two of them playing together in our front room.

*Leo Rowsome, Davy Mawhinney and my Father*

When we visited my cousin at Tandragee in Co Armagh, whose Grandfather was a fiddler, the pipes went as well. To this day, my cousin, like myself can still hear the haunting tone of the O’Mealy pipes.

*Tandragee Co Armagh**Ballywhisken Co Down*

As you are aware he also played with the Co Antrim Fiddlers Association.



*Fiddlers Night at Ballyclare Comrades FC 10th March 1953
Standing 3rd from left Davy Mawhinney, 6th from left my Father*

I always knew my Father's opinion of O'Mealy and was therefore delighted when during a visit to the library of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum many years ago I discovered an article by F Carragher, Curatorial Division, UFTM entitled R.L. O'Mealy – Uilleann Piper and Pipemaker. Within this article he states:-

The Seán Reid Society Journal. Volume 3. 2009 3.16.6

Because few if any recordings of O'Mealy's playing on the pipes survive it is now difficult to judge his ability as a player. However, contemporary comments are mostly complimentary to quote his ex-pupil and friend, Mr Willy Hope – 'You would have stood to your neck in snow to listen to him'

I think that confirms how my Father felt about O'Mealy.

Through his friendship with Davy Mawhinney my Father became involved with the Co Antrim Fiddlers Association. To play with them he needed a set of pipes in D. For this set he turned to Leo Rowsome. Not only did he get a set of pipes but also a friend.



Leo Rowsome and my Father



*Frank Leo and my Father
with wives and daughters*

How good a player was my Father? I cannot comment but admit I would be prejudiced. What I can say is that I have two medals from Feis Béal Feirste and engraved on the back of one is the following:-

Uilleann Pipes
1st Prize
WJ Hope
1950

For highland piping I have two engraved 1st prize medals awarded to Castleton Pipe Band in 1911 and 1914, a First Prize Certificate awarded to West Belfast Pipe Band in 1913 and also various medals from the North of Ireland Band Association Contests which regrettably are not engraved. I also have a photocopy of an article where Joe Simpson the Secretary of the North of Ireland Bands Association lists information on pipe bands from the Association records. He lists results of contests from 1924 to 1951. My Father is named against the following bands.

Lebanon Street, Willowfield, Star of Eden, McQuiston, Ballykeel, Gilnahirk.
I also know from another source that he was Pipe Major of Ballynahinch for eighteen years and that he and Frank taught Ballykeel Blackwatch and Ballykeel Star. I cannot remember who taught which.

I said at the beginning that I hoped this information would add to what is already known and might also answer some questions. All along one question has always been in the back of my mind. In Ken McLeod's excellent article⁷ he says

It is also difficult for me to believe that William Hope did not attend R.L.'s funeral, but we can be quite sure that this was the case from Farrar family recollections!

First of all I am not making excuses for my Father. I also found this very strange knowing the respect he had for O'Mealy as a player, teacher and friend. It only began to make sense when I read that O'Mealy was buried on St Patrick's Day. My first thought, what time? The Knockbreda Burial Register shows a time of 2.30pm. If this is the time of burial then this could provide the answer. Every St Patrick's Day the Schools Cup Rugby Final is held at Ravenhill. For years the Queens University OTC Pipe Band played before the match. A google search confirmed that a match was played on that day. As a piper and teacher himself, where would O'Mealy have wanted my father to be – at a graveside or ensuring that the young men, whom he taught, gave the best performance they were capable of giving.

My Father died on the 20th March in his 80th year. He was still playing and teaching the Highland pipes and playing the Uilleann pipes. He never lost his love and enthusiasm for both instruments.



Contributed by William 'Billy' Hope, March 2014.

⁷ See 'William Hope', article 3.16.6

Acknowledgements;

William Hope. Piper and son of the subject of this article.

Keith Haines, Archivist of Campbell College, Belfast.

Bill Polley, (Bill's mother was WJ's daughter 'Sadie').

Cecil Colville. Kells, Co Antrim. Piper and fiddler.

Wilbert Garvin. Kells, Co Antrim. Piper.

Trevor Stewart. Belfast. Piper.

Ronan Browne. Spiddal, Co Galway. Piper.

Len Graham. Singer and collector, Mullaghbawn, Co Armagh.

Na Píobairí Uilleann.