

## The Bagpipes of North East England

The North East of England has a particularly strong regional folk culture that includes two native forms of bagpipe that have a written repertoire reaching back into the first half of the eighteenth century. They are known as the 'Northumbrian Smallpipes', and the 'Half Long Pipes' or more commonly nowadays the 'Border Pipes'. Both are bellows blown pipes, but have quite a distinct difference in sound and fingering style. The Smallpipes are a quieter sounding instrument perfectly suited to playing indoors whilst the Border Pipes have a more strident sound similar in tone to Great Highland Bagpipe but at a much-reduced volume.



Here is a YouTube link of piper, Paul Martin, from North-east England playing the Northumbrian Small Pipes

<https://youtu.be/chKKbRmWX1E>

The Northumbrian Smallpipes during the 18th century were a simpler instrument, without the keyed chanter developed in the first two decades of the 19th century by pipe makers such as Dunn of Newcastle and the Reids of North Shields. This keyed chanter extended the range of notes possible to play, and thereby enabled the popular fiddle hornpipes of the time to be played on the pipes. The repertoire of the keyless chanter though, as preserved in the tune book of John Peacock, remains popular with pipers of the North East of England to this day. Uniquely among bagpipes, the chanter is closed at the bottom allowing each note to be separated by silence giving the Smallpipes their distinctive playing style and sound.



Known at one time throughout many parts of the British Isles, these bagpipes were particularly popular during the 18th century in the north of England and the Border and lowland areas of Scotland.

We have music written for these pipes in the William Dixon manuscript dating back to 1733. They have a conical bored chanter and are usually played with a half open fingering. Three drones in a common stock either played across the chest or sometimes over the piper's shoulder.

Here is a YouTube link of piper, Paul Martin, from North-east England playing the Border Pipes

<https://youtu.be/LYfNkVgCA3o>