



From left to right, Dr Amélie Addison and Dr Rachael Durkin of Northumbria University and Bill Griffiths of North East Museums, pictured outside Northumbria's Sutherland Building

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## A musical celebration of the North East's rich heritage

**Northumbria University and North East Museums are teaming up to present *Small Pipes – Big History*, a vibrant evening of music, history, and cultural reflection, celebrating the unique legacy of the Northumbrian Small Pipes – England's only regional musical instrument.**

Taking place on Wednesday 14 May, from 6pm to 8pm, the event will celebrate the cultural significance of the Northumbrian Small Pipes and will

feature a dynamic blend of scholarly insight, live performance, and community celebration.

Held in Northumbria University's historic Great Hall, the event also builds on the growing cultural collaboration between the University and North East Museums.

*Small Pipes – Big History* will include a talk by local piper and historian Richard Heard on the enduring tradition of small piping in North Shields, as well as live musical performances by acclaimed piper Andy May.

[Dr Amélie Addison](#), Lecturer in [Music](#) at Northumbria University, will give a presentation about Gateshead-born composer and Master of the King's Musick William Shield, and his connection to regional folk music.

Anne Moore, curator of the [Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum](#) – which has recently joined [North East Museums](#) – will discuss the William Alfred Cocks collection of bagpipes, housed in Morpeth.

The collection, which now belongs to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle, contains over 120 sets of pipes from across Europe, including notable instruments belonging to the Bewick family, a miniature set made for Queen Mary's Dolls' House and a French musette once played at the court of the Sun King Louis XIV.



A set of Border Pipes from the Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum

Northumbria University's [Dr Rachael Durkin](#), Associate Professor of History and Music, will also discuss the Jeremy Montagu Collection of Global Musical Instruments, housed at Northumbria University.

The Montagu Collection was compiled by conductor, curator and scholar Jeremy Montagu over more than 50 years, and includes rare examples of instruments from diverse communities, spanning from the 12th century to present day.

Following his death in 2020, the collection of more than 2,700 instruments was donated to Northumbria by Arts Council England's Acceptance in Lieu scheme through Dr Durkin – a founding member of the University's Music degree programme and a colleague of Mr Montagu's.

Speaking about the event, Dr Durkin said: "This marks an important moment for the music collections of Northumbria University and North East Museums. Music plays an intrinsic role in society and cultural identity, and the Northumbrian Small Pipes are no exception. Collaborating to celebrate an iconic instrument, and its unique sound, is an exciting way to showcase the richness of the expertise and our music collections to the general public."



Bill Griffiths, Head of Programmes and Collections at North East Museums, added: “We are constantly finding new and exciting ways to work with Northumbria University and after North East Museums took on the management of Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum on 1 April, collaborating on an event around the Northumbrian Small Pipes made sense. It is set to be a wonderful event with an interesting mix of live music and insightful presentations.”

Although the first record of the Northumbrian Small Pipes dates from the late 17th Century, the pipes in their present form were developed in North Shields during the first half of the 19th century, by Robert Reid and subsequently his son James.

In the 20th Century the town was home to important modern pipe makers and players, and there is still a tradition of piping and pipe-making in North Shields today.

This event will acknowledge the North Shields 800 festival, celebrating 800 years since the founding of the township.

It is the latest development of the partnership between Northumbria University and North East Museums, which is rooted in shared values of education, cultural heritage, and public engagement.

***Small Pipes – Big History* takes place on Wednesday, 14 May from 6pm–8pm in the Great Hall of Northumbria University’s Sutherland Building, College Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 8ST. Entrance is free, and booking is not required.**

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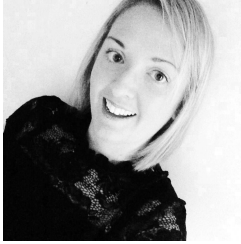


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