

James (Jimmy) Martin

BLOW, BLOW BRAW WIND

by HELEN
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James Martin is, by all accounts, a modest man, not inclined to blow his own trumpet.

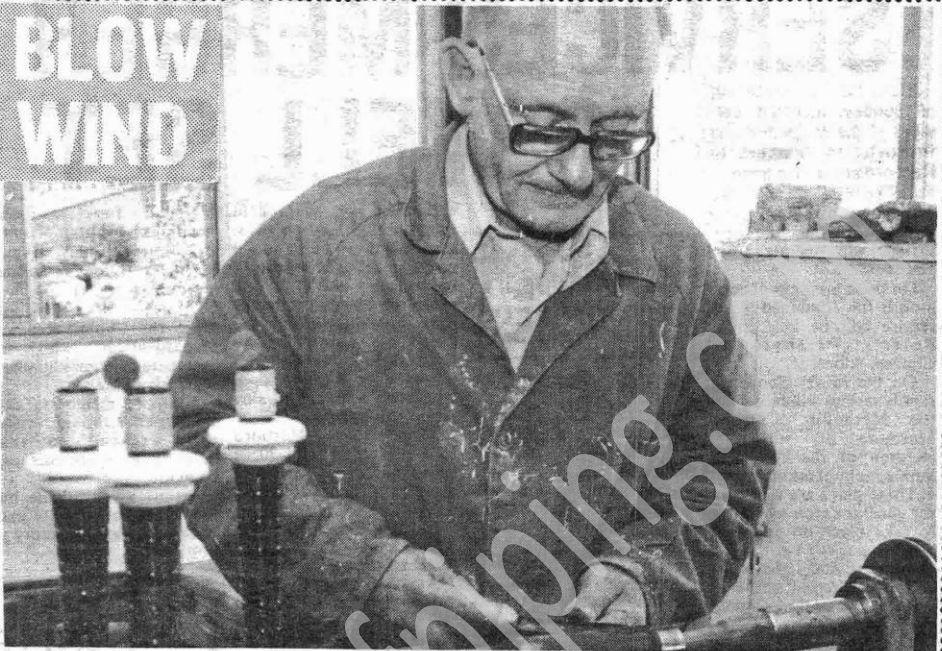
But ask him for a skirl on the pipes and he'll be happy to oblige.

It's a natural enough reaction for a man who not only plays the pipes, but also makes them.

Dried out

James Martin, from Edinburgh, and now of Harbord, is the only man in Australia who makes bagpipes from go to whoa or bag to blow.

There may be one or two others who manufacture parts, but in Mr Martin's Brookvale factory, which he shares with another businessman, you can watch the entire pipeline, so to speak.



The bagpipe-making process begins with the sawing of wood. Some people (benighted Sassenachs, of course) have been known to complain that the

finished product makes a similar sound.

From the sawn wood the pipes are fashioned on a lathe, then "roughed" down, bored and left to dry out for six weeks.

Meanwhile Mr Martin makes the bag, which is about 20 in long. It is made from treated cowhide (not the traditional sheepskin) and has to be stitched by hand.

Over the bag goes a tartan cover which represents the clan of the client (Mr Martin is a Cameron man himself).

Mountings

The bolts of tartan are specially imported from Scotland, and their hues and patterns ring the changes through Royal Stuart, Hunting Stuart, Cameron, McLennan, McPherson, McQueen and Black Watch.

To the bag the pipes are fitted — three tall drones, the blowpipe and the chanter, on which the notes are made.

These are the basics of the bagpipes. But it is the trimmings, added to the quality of Mr Martin's workmanship, which determine the ultimate cost.

The mountings can be imitation ivory or the genuine article from Africa, but which Mr Martin imports from London.

The reeds in the

drones and the pipe chanter are made in Scotland from Spanish cane.

Add a few touches of engraved silver and a tasselled cord to the drones and there is the completed set of bagpipes in all its awesome glory.

James Martin learned his trade back in his home city, Edinburgh, under the aegis of Mr James Robertson who, Mr Martin claims, was the greatest of them all.

From an apprentice at 14, Mr Martin rose to be foreman bagpipe-maker before leaving his homeland for Australia nearly 20 years ago.

In Australia he began with repairs, but in nine months, had built up the pipe-making business, making quality bagpipes that sell from \$245 to \$825 (with the sterling silver and real ivory touch of class).

Full pitch

His market includes high schools, colleges and Australia's 250 pipe bands — some 2000 pipers in all.

Even working at full pitch, Mr Martin can turn out no more than six sets of pipes a month, with repair jobs in between times.

This makes him a phenomenon in modern times — a craftsman with too much work and no need to advertise.

MR JAMES MARTIN ... he is a bagpipes craftsman — and plays the bagpipes as well as makes them.

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