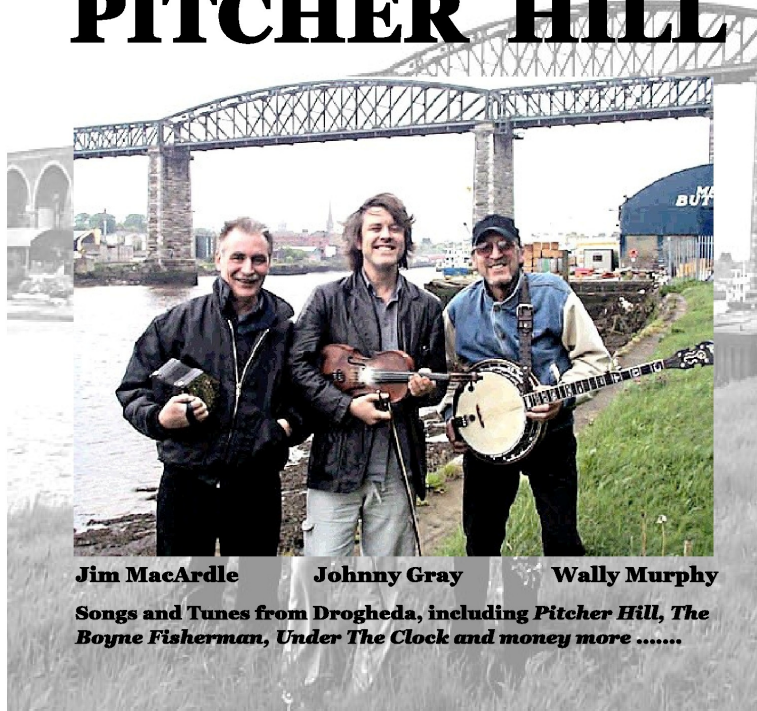


PITCHER HILL



Jim MacArdle Johnny Gray Wally Murphy
Songs and Tunes from Drogheda, including Pitcher Hill, The Boyne Fisherman, Under The Clock and money more

Pitcher Hill was formed by Jim MacArdle, Johnny Gray and Wally Murphy round about 2000. It came from our playing together in Carberry's and being offered a gig in the Neptune Hotel in Bettystown every Sunday evening. This turned into one of the longest regular gigs I ever had and was a perfect way to play and develop our favourite music. So, we embarked on the gig, playing in Carberry's in the lunchtime session and after lunch (or not) making our way out to Bettystown to play from 6-8pm. At the time we had no name for the group and decided it would be called after something Drogheda-related. After rejecting names like the *Curly Holes*, *Butty Lane* and a few others of the vulgar variety, we finally settled on the name **Pitcher Hill** and gave Wally one week to write a song of the same name – and a good one it was.

Wally was born in Drogheda, and spent eight of his younger years America in the 1970s. He was drafted and spent 2 years in the US Army, but missed the trip to 'Nam because he was born outside the USA. While in the States, he and some friends formed a garage band called *Luke Warmwater*. He returned to Drogheda in the early 70s, playing in various pubs including Carberry's and Leahy's of Shop Street. Wally toured Europe with *Luke Warmwater* in the mid-70s and lived in Holland for 3 years, but returned to Drogheda in 1976 (with his gold in a crock) and formed the legendary *Travelling John*.

Johnny's father John came from his home on the on the Cavan/Leitrim border to work in Drogheda in the 1970s . I first recorded him in 1977 – he was a highly distinctive fiddler with great attack in his bowing style and in my view was the outstanding fiddler playing in Drogheda in the 1970s and 1980s. I'm glad to say that Johnny's playing is just like his father's.

The Music

1. **The Boyne Fishermen** (*Song*)

Composed by Wally as a tribute to his good buddies in the *Boyne Fishermen* who now provide a magnificent a *Rescue & Recovery Service* on the Boyne and at aquatic locations all over Ireland.

2. **The Gander at the Pratie Hole/ Slieve Russell** (*Jigs*)

I learnt the first tune from the late Tommy McArdle from Tallanstown, who told me that the first part of the tune mimics the strutting walk of the gander to the pratie hole and the second part evokes his lighter mood after he has done his business. I learnt the second tune from concertina player Tommy McCarthy, late of Milltown Malbay

3. **The Laugh & Half Daft** (*Song*)

I first met Mary Ann Carolan from the Hill of Rath in the early 1970s. She was the finest traditional singer of her generation and played concertina in the old style. This is one of her songs, which is reputed to be a derivation of a song called the *Lass of Llandaff* (somewhere in Wales).

4. **The Girls of Our Town/Scotch Mary** (*Flings*)

These two tunes were learnt from Tommy McArdle of Tallanstown and are examples of of a tune type which was played as flings for the set and which subsequently developed and were commonly played as reels.

5. **Under the Clock** (*Song*)

A great song by Wally evoking life in Drogheda in the 1960's and 70s, where the 'labour' was above in William Street and O'Hagan's was below in West Street and the 'Tonsel' was where it always was.

6. **Mary Ann's Three Reels**

Mary Ann Carolan was a great concertina player in the old (up and down) style and remembered local versions of many well-known tunes as played by her father. The tunes here are *The Heathery Breeze*, *The Ladies Pantaloons* and *The Hill of Rath*.

7. **Young Bob Ridley** (Song & Tune)

This is a song from Mary Ann Carolan which had its origins as an American Minstrel song of the late 19th Century where everyone on the Plantation knew his place or he got a 'lickin'. Johnny tacked-on a lyrical version of Gerdy Commane's Polka to the end of the song.

8. **Doc Kammerer's /The Flowers of Edinburgh** (American Tunes)

I learned these tunes from a recording of Bert Levy and Peter Ostroushko. Bert, who is a Concertina, 5 string banjo and Bandoneon virtuoso, spent same time in Dublin in the mid 70s.

9. **Pitcher Hill (Song)**

This song was written to order by Wally and, having worked in Millmount Museum, I know that *'coming down you're laughing, goin' up you're out of breath'* is a perfect description of negotiating the Pitcher Hill steps.

10. **Caisleán and Óir (Hornpipe)**

In our original recording we had another hornpipe tacked onto Junior Crehan's great tune. We made a mess of recording the first tune, but the second one sounded so good we kept it. Wally's banjo and Johnny's fiddle places the tune somewhere between Junior's home in Milltown Malbay and Ralph Stanley's home in McClure, Virginia.

11. **When the Cock Crows it is Day / Na Ceannabhain Bána**

I learnt the first tune from a recording of Seamus Ennis and the second at a concertina class in Milltown Malbay from Yvonne Griffin during Willie Week.

12. **Sally Brown (Song)**

A song recorded by Sweeney's Men in 1968.

13. **In Sweet Tyrone did Tom Malone (Song & Tune)**

I learnt this song from Petie Curran, a cousin of Mary Ann Carolan. The tune is *The Rollicking Boys around Tandaragee*. Accordeon on this track is played by Hughie Grogan.

14. **Down the Glen (March)**

A march with a mystical feel learnt from Tommy McArdle.

15. **Conamara (Sean Ó hEanaigh) (Song)**

I mis-learnt this song from a brilliant Radio na Gaeltachta compilation recording *'Togha agus Rogha'*. I have no excuse, I have only myself to blame, but it's still a great song about young Irish people travelling to many parts of the world in search of work.



June 2018