

## The History of The Peter Worrell Crown Flute

On the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2004, I took the notion of attending the Boyne Memorial Parade held in Antrim. I was beginning to get itchy feet with the desire to return to marching with a good melody flute band. Some bands were outstanding like Black Skull Glasgow and The Shankill Road Defenders; however the band that stood out for me was the Sir George White Memorial Flute Band from Broughshane. Not being one to make rash decisions, I gave it one year to consider the prospect of joining and also time to get hold of my beloved make of flute a Hawkes & Son Crown A-Z. I researched, wrote letters, advertised and asked around the band scene but all to no avail. I researched from various sources the technical data for constructing a flute and passed these on to a cousin who was a flute maker. My cousin however was not in a position to construct such an instrument as it required the highest skills in artful architecture that he simply did not possess.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2005 I returned to the Orange procession as planned and again watched the bands with the specific purpose on concentrating my attention on the Sir George White Memorial Flute. This time I followed the band for a fair distance and was suitably impressed. I met with Stephen Wharry in the field and expressed my interest in joining. I talked with Stephen briefly and the subject of Crown A-Z's came up and I was surprised than no one in the band had one.

Shortly after this I joined the band and as there was no flute available for me, I rang John Millar in London to buy my own. It was at this point that I learned from John that he had only a few flutes left as he had decided to retire from flute making and had sold the equipment on. When I reported this information to Sir George White, they expressed concern over where their next new batch of flutes would come from as they would need to be thinking of a new set as the old Millar Wicks had passed their sell by date.

It was at this point that a need was identified and also the impetus to solve the solution by seeking to enlist the help of a top flute maker in this venture. Night after night I googled and e mailed all of the top flute makers in the world that I could find and the only one that replied back was Pete Worrell.

Pete however was not really all that interested and on the other hand I did not even have a copy of a Crown A-Z for him to replicate. It was a bit of a dilemma when, as in all good stories, something happened to open the way forward.

Stephen knew of my past in flute construction and happened to have an old flute belonging to James Carmichael from New Cumnock for fixing. On seeing the flute I soon realised that this was a Chas E Foote Crown A-Z, probably the best Crown copy ever made and one of a set made for Ballyclare Victoria. This was a real find and Fred Crossett, my cousin fixed the broken tenon joint but I sent the flute to Pete Worrell for repadding and for the keywork to be sorted. I asked Stephen if it was ok to take measurements and he said he could not see any problems with that.

When the flute was returned to me I couldn't believe how good it was. Easily the best flute I had ever played and from then on I literally plagued Pete Worrell to make one for me based on this flute. I think simply to get me off his back Pete gave in and made a flute for me. I did however agree that I would help Pete to make a few sales to bands here to get his name and flute known and this left me with a fair degree of responsibility.

The rest of this story is described in my letter to Pete which he placed on his web site.

Brian Crossett  
Sir George White Flute Band Broughshane

28 December 2006

Dear Pete

I decided to write to you a letter of commendation and appreciation for the flute you have made for me. As an ardent flute player and band enthusiast with a long history in bands, spanning some 40 years, beginning at age 10 in Drumconvis Flute Band Coagh and continuing in the Young Conquerors Shankill Road Belfast. I have been band master of the Duke of Schomberg Flute Band and the Lord Louis Mountbatten Memorial Flute Band, I believe I can know a good flute when I see one. I have previously owned two Hawkes & Son Crown A-Z flutes, one made in African Blackwood the other in ebonite both of which I sold to the Whiterock Flute Band, as at the time I had decided to retire from bands. I later regretted this as I Believed I would never find another flute as good.

I searched the internet daily looking for a Crown for sale but was unsuccessful. Having joined the Sir George White Flute Band who used the Miller Wicks flute which I highly recommend as a good flute, I learned to make do with a flute reasonably close to the A-Z. However I

was still on the lookout for a Crown A-Z original. When I discovered your website I wondered if you might be able to make a Crown replica and you know all the rest.

Now that I have a Peter Worrell flute, I have no further interest in a Crown A-Z. The Worrell is so much superior. Even to look at it is a masterpiece. I have an instrument that is as sweet as a nut in tone with a full bodied sound and is easy to play. The high notes do not squeal and the low notes are strong. The volume is unbelievable. Some notes are difficult to register on other flutes like the high F, other notes are strained like the high A or Top F. However, on the Worrell every note is accurate and easily reached. The keys are beautiful to look at and set perfectly so that the springs have just the right tension. I appreciate also that consideration has been made to counteract over depression of the keys so that tunes with fast runs can be played easily without slurring. Some tunes have parts which require a reduction in volume like for instance Old Comrades, on the Worrell this is easily done without distortion of the notes. Other flutes do not allow for this.

Finally criticisms and that is by way of suggestion perhaps the springs could be stainless steel to eliminate rusting. Otherwise Pete you have made the perfect instrument and I look forward for the time in the near future that the rest of the band has theirs. Probably the best B flat simple system flute ever made.

Brian Crossett