

# THE NORTHERN FIDDLER

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS  
OF DONEGAL AND TYRONE

ALLEN FELDMAN &  
EAMONN O'DOHERTY

THE  
NORTHERN  
FIDDLER

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ALLEN FELDMAN

General Text, Music Editor

EAMONN O'DOHERTY

Introduction, Drawings and Photographs

With Transcriptions By  
Andrew Robinson

Music Collected By Allen Feldman,  
Eamonn O'Doherty and Natalie Joynt



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# INTRODUCTION

The music transcribed in this book is just a fraction of the instrumental folk music which exists in Ireland. That it was collected in only two counties and from only a handful of musicians in those counties is an indication of the amount of traditional material surviving in the whole country.

The greater part of the music was made for dancing, and with songs and airs it formed in the past a vast shared culture, created over the centuries by the common people for their own expression and enjoyment. It is rich, subtle and varied, and although much survives, much more has certainly vanished forever, for social change and the levelling effects of the mass media have affected Ireland as everywhere else. But geographical remoteness, and more particularly, the general cultural attitudes engendered by the unique social and political history of the country have meant the survival of a large body of music which would otherwise have vanished as it did in many other parts of Europe, for only a century ago folk music was widespread in most countries in the West. Consequently its continued existence in Ireland has a significance which reaches beyond its enthusiasts and beyond the shores of the country, because what remains here is an extensive musical legacy of a popular culture which was once widespread. It provided for the common people of Europe an alternative form of expression to the 'high art' music of the nobility and the church, which in turn had already absorbed much traditional material. It was a form which was more attuned to their everyday world, the world of the fairs, weddings and festivals of the countryside and of the marketplaces and taverns of the towns. Through their music, songs and dances the ordinary people proclaimed their existence and gave meaning and continuity to their social life. Their history otherwise went largely unrecorded, for in the stratified society of Europe observers of the everyday were few, while the private lives, the political intrigues and the wars of the ruling class were meticulously recorded for posterity.

The wholesale disappearance of folk music in the most industrialised parts of Western Europe, then, gives an added importance to what survives in Ireland, for it expresses the spirit of a vanished lifestyle and is a living record of an important aspect of Western European social history. The music also has a contemporary significance, for at a time when young urban people are questioning modern mass culture, particularly musical culture, with its vast passive audiences ministered to by artificial creations of the media, the existence of an art form on a more intimate scale, which depends on reciprocal participation of audience and musician, is living proof of an alternative approach to music. The surge of interest in traditional music in recent years both in Ireland and abroad is an indication that not everyone is happy in the role of passive cultural consumer, alienated by electronics and the television screen from the few performers chosen by promoters and the media to be the spokesmen for millions. Admittedly the mass popularity of country and western music and the elements of folk music in the rock music of the Fifties to the present day, demonstrates that it does have a resilience, even in these alien contexts.

Johnny Comac,  
Dungannon, Co  
Tyrone



Why has traditional music survived in Ireland and why has it virtually disappeared elsewhere in Europe? Without going into the history of Irish music in detail, a subject which has already been covered in more general books than this one, (see the bibliography) it may be worth looking at the set of political and social circumstances which changed Europe, but which, by largely passing Ireland by, allowed the survival into the twentieth century of the type of culture which supported the folk music tradition. While great changes were taking place elsewhere in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in Ireland a society persisted where the great majority of people, denied advancement or participation in the 'official' life of the country and isolated from change, continued to entertain themselves as they had done in the past, and perpetuated the peasant musical and social entertainments, which had their roots in the feudal society of the Middle Ages, and which the new economic and social orders were eroding elsewhere.

One common factor at least united all the countries of Europe before the seventeenth century. This was a social structure which consisted in all cases of a numerically small aristocratic and merchant class, and a populous peasantry and urban poor. There was little contact between the two cultures. The nobility, leisured and educated, possessed the wealth and power to engage the finest talent available to extend the scope and complexity of the arts. Through painting, sculpture, literature and music, they expressed their aspirations and mirrored their world. The common people on the other hand had only limited opportunities for direct expression. They usually had neither the time nor resources for painting or sculpture (even had they lived in buildings suitable for them) and lacked the education for literature. Music, song and dance, however, required only wit, energy and relatively cheap instruments, and these became the chief vehicle for their self expression.



Detail from  
'Peasants merry-  
making' (David  
Teniers and Lucas  
van Uden).  
Courtesy of the  
National Gallery  
of Ireland

Remnants of this mediaeval music and dance are still to be found in the more isolated parts of Western Europe, particularly in France, Spain and Italy although further north it has almost entirely disappeared, and the music is often surprisingly close in sound to the rhythm of Irish folk music. I have heard elbow pipes in the Auvergne playing what would make very credible Irish reels, and an accordion and tambourine in the Abruzzi mountains playing a 'santorello' which made a perfect Kerry slide. But in most cases in Europe what little survives of folk music is preserved as a state sponsored museum piece, and the way of life which gave it meaning has gone. This way of life was undoubtedly 'brutish and short' but — perhaps for that very reason — also full of passion.

One way of experiencing the flavour of every-day life in the Middle Ages and Renaissance is through the art of the time, particularly the works of genre painters such as Bosch and Breughel, as well as the products of a multitude of anonymous medieval illustrators. Here we can see the street musicians milling in the crowded towns, and the locals footing it out to a piper at a country wedding. It was this popular European music, coupled with what survived from the Gaelic past, which formed the roots of Irish traditional music. From these works we can deduce not only the character of the dancing, but even, from the instruments used, something of the sound of the music itself. Indeed the instruments in use in the fifteenth century would be surprisingly familiar to an Irish folk musician today. In the woodcut (below) we see pipes, fiddle, flute and harp, and a type of bodhran complete with stick; the full range of instruments which form the basis of Irish folk music today.



An early Renaissance instrument maker's shop. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque de Valence



Cripples and  
beggars  
(Hieronymus  
Bosch). Courtesy  
of Der  
Österreichische  
National-  
bibliothek

The bagpipe seems to have been the most widespread and popular of peasant instruments in northern Europe in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, with the lute claiming popularity in the cities, but the harp, whether its origin was Irish or not, is not uncommon.

A harper may be seen among Bosch's lute-playing beggars in the illustration above, and all three popular instruments appear in the woodcut attributed to Albrecht Dürer below.



Woodcut by  
Albrecht Dürer,  
from the  
*Narrenschiff* of  
Sebastian Brant  
(1494).

The polarized society to which these musicians belonged was to undergo dramatic changes in the next two centuries. As the cities grew and society changed the apparently timeless patterns of rural life were disrupted by industrialization, commerce and communication, and only in areas of Britain and Europe which were geographically remote (or cut off from change by both geography and political manoeuvre, as in Ireland) did the echoes of this stratified but unambiguous society survive.

The Industrial Revolution and the social upheavals of the late eighteenth century accelerated changes in the social structure of Europe. Barriers became less well defined, and a new middle class emerged. Ireland's history, at least from the early seventeenth century, had been very different from that of the rest of Europe. Whilst other countries were engaged in colonial adventurism, Ireland alone in Europe was herself a virtual colony. The Penal Laws following the defeat of the Jacobites made certain that the Industrial Revolution took hold only in the north east, and ensured the perpetuation of the feudal agrarian system in the rest of the country. The failure of the 1798 rising meant the failure of instant social revolution, and the subsequent withdrawal of the Irish Parliament left the country a full colony.

The aspiring middle class in Britain and Europe, in their search for betterment, looked for their cultural models not to their roots, but to those they took to be their betters. Ironically, when they did view their past, it was at second-hand through the rose-tinted spectacles with which the aristocracy, aided by the Gothic and Romantic poets, artists and composers, liked to observe the peasantry. As the nineteenth century progressed, the piano became an essential fixture in the bourgeois home and classical music, no matter how debased in style or second-rate in execution, was preferred over any other. The rural Irish, their own aristocracy long vanished, were understandably less enthusiastic about the music of the gentry, the agents of their oppression, than were their counterparts in Europe. There was in Ireland not even the pretence of that benign paternalism and reciprocal mass affection which still marked the relationship between the public and the Royal Houses of Europe. The Irish looked for their cultural models nostalgically to their Gaelic past, but the old Gaelic music too, was the music of an aristocracy and was by all accounts refined, decorous and apparently not danced to. In Eugene O'Curry's exhaustive investigation of the music and musical instruments of the ancient Irish, there are virtually no references to popular entertainment, excepting the eleventh century poem describing the 'Fair of Carman'. Perhaps in that clan-based society everyone was a participant in the chieftains' court, but it is unlikely that there was not a less formal music, or that there was no dancing at all, although O'Curry could find no reference to it. At any rate the harp was proscribed in Ireland in the seventeenth century; harpers risked the death sentence, and anyone harbouring a harper was liable to severe penalties. Although the law was not always carried out to the letter, Wolfe Tone's testy remark during the Belfast harpers' convention a century later, 'Strum, strum and be hanged,' might have been taken all too literally in the sixteenth century. It is a wonder that any of the old music survived at all under these conditions, but it undoubtedly did because today, despite the influences of the intervening centuries, the sound the character of Irish airs and dance music are still unmistakable.



Woodcut of a harper in a tavern (School of Thomas Bewick)

Musically the social changes in Britain and Europe meant that in the nineteenth century classical music became available to the growing middle class, but although patronage of the music passed in some cases from the aristocracy to the state, the composers and performers were always, as they had been at the courts in earlier times, a specialized few, and the new large plebeian audiences, listening but not participating, set the stage for the huge passive audiences of the mass media in the twentieth century. There was still popular music, of course, but its character and particularly the scale of public involvement had changed, and by the time of the music hall it too had become a spectator rather than a participatory entertainment. The country dances and local musicians with their varying regional styles disappeared except in remoter areas; folk songs polished by generations of use were displaced by the catchy novelties minted by the new popular music industry.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the folk traditions themselves were being ransacked for new material. In America, mass production and more importantly, mass consumption hit the popular music world. The production line had taken away the identity of ethnic groups and individuals; now that identity was re-hashed as a product, and what remained of folk culture, both European and American, was trivialized for mass consumption in the cities. The intention of capitalism is to turn everything of value into a commodity but to accomplish this the thing itself must be removed or distanced from the consumer. This was a process which, for traditional music, had started fifty years earlier in Europe: the chirpy Cockney, the stage Irishman, the Bohemian violinist, were creations of the bourgeoisie, a sugar coating on the bitter pill of poverty and exploitation. In America, with the help of Stephen Foster, the oppressed Black became the Happy Darkie, ironically most often played by a white actor in 'blackface'. No source was spared, and at the turn of the century an unbelievable array of stereotypes hit the stage. Kilted Scots and yodelling Germans jostled with Neapolitan tenors and jigging Paddy, whose honey-tongued evocations of far-off green hills smothered memories of the Famine, the harsh realities of emigration and the struggle for survival in the New World. These sentimental stereotypes were the middle class legacy of the Romantic movement in classical music. In Ireland Tom Moore was their immediate antecedent, and our particular green myth is with us still.

The continuing struggle between the Irish and England in the seventeenth century had resulted in increased social and commercial contact between Ireland and the continent, particularly France. This commerce reached its apogee in the late seventeenth century and even after the Flight of the Wild Geese in the century's last decade it continued somewhat abated in the eighteenth, with many of the minor Irish gentry and merchants sending their sons to the continent for the education which was denied them at home (Daniel O'Connell was one such). Musically this contact meant the introduction of new musical forms, dances and instruments from the continent. The modern fiddle became widely accepted and the uilleann pipes approached their final form, modelled mainly on the ubiquitous mediaeval bagpipe but incorporating the refinement of the French elbow-blown musette with the ancient sounds and playing skills of the great Gaelic warpipes. Dancing masters, often English or French, toured the country teaching new dances (and the music to accompany them) to enthusiastic audiences which included the very poorest section of the community. Dancing, in fact, became a craze:

'Even the very lame and blind,  
If trump or bagpipe they do hear,  
In dancing posture do appear.'



Woodcut (School  
of Bewick)

Many experts such as Brendan Breathnach,<sup>1</sup> are convinced that the eighteenth century was the period in which our traditional music took on most of the conspicuous characteristics which distinguish it today, and the period in which the bulk of the dance music was composed. The dancing craze seems to have been central to its development and may be worth looking at in more detail.

'It is strange, and will, I am sure, appear to my readers almost incredible, that, as far as I have ever read, there is no reference that can be identified as containing a clear allusion to dancing in any of our really ancient MS books.'<sup>2</sup> If, as O'Curry suggests, the ancient Gaels were not predisposed to dance, their seventeenth and eighteenth century descendants certainly were; indeed they applied themselves to the pastime with enough zeal to make up for the apparent inertia of their ancestors. A dance mania gripped large sections of the population, and one cannot read a social history or contemporary chronicle which does not allude to it. Edward McLysaght in his *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century* talks of the 'love of music, dancing and storytelling' common to all classes and singles out dancing as 'the chief if not only, relaxation of the poorer classes'.<sup>3</sup> Among McLysaght's sources are Richard Head who, observing Sunday pastimes in 1674 saw 'in every field a fiddle and the lasses footing it till they are all of a foam'. John Dunton, whose letters Head published for the first time, describes a wedding where 'we had a bagpiper and a blind harper that dinned us constantly with their music, to which there was perpetual dancing'. He also mentions the custom of planting a special tree as a gathering place: 'hither all the people resort with a piper on Sundays and Holydays in the afternoon, where the young folks dance till the cows come home'. The title of the well-known reel 'The Old Bush' supposedly alludes to one of these notable trees.

Almost a century later, in 1780, Arthur Young, the conscientious geographer and humane observer of the contemporary Irish scene, noted that 'dancing is very general among the poor people, almost universal in every cabin. Dancing-masters of their own rank travel through the country from cabin to cabin, with a piper or blind fiddler; and the pay is sixpence a quarter... Weddings are always celebrated with much dancing; and a Sunday rarely passes without a dance.'<sup>4</sup> Earlier he had observed that 'all the poor people, both men and women, love to dance, and are exceedingly fond of the amusement'. Of the dances most favoured Young notes that 'besides the Irish jig, which they can dance with a most *luxuriant* expression, minuets and country dances are taught; and I even heard some talk of cotillions coming in'.

It seems strange that there should have been so much jiggling and gaiety in the eighteenth century when oppression was at its height. However, despite poverty and the Penal Laws, rural Ireland at that time was by all accounts a lively place. The population was growing faster than anywhere else in Europe and, as so often happens, the people became more keenly interested in what was officially denied them. The attempts to proscribe religion and education had the effect of making people more fervently devotional and more eager for learning than they might otherwise have been. Hedge schools flourished, and by 1824 there were more than 8,000 in the country, four times the number of charitable and officially financed schools.<sup>5</sup> With music and dancing it was much the same. Oppressed and downtrodden people will express themselves enthusiastically in the only ways open to them. Under different circumstances cultural deprivation of a similar kind has produced the same reliance on music as the principal form of expression of a people, notably in Black America, and, at this moment, in South Africa. If this expression was overtly physical as in dancing, it had perhaps an added dimension of subversion. But perhaps this is reading too much into a spontaneous activity enjoyed by every race and every class at every time in history, mainly for the sheer physical pleasure of it. And on that topic one may also wonder where the physical energy for all this activity came from. The common picture of Ireland in the eighteenth century is of a populace on the brink of starvation, and indeed there were periodic famines throughout the century. Some chroniclers maintain, however, that the Irish poor fared comparatively well in the eighteenth century, compared, that is, with their English and continental counterparts. The abundant potato (apart from its periodic and, at that time unpredictable, failures) gave them a large measure of independence in providing food for themselves, and it was, until the disastrous Great Famine, a veritable manna, easy enough to cultivate to afford some leisure. Arthur Young was convinced that 'the sparingness with which our [English] labourer eats his bread and cheese is well known; mark the Irishman's potato bowl placed on the floor, the whole family on their hams around it devouring a quantity almost incredible, the beggar seating himself to it with a hearty welcome, the pig taking his share as readily as the wife... No man can often have been a witness of it without being convinced of the plenty, and I will add the cheerfulness, that attends it.'<sup>6</sup>

In 1830, however, the enthusiasm for dancing seems to have been as great as ever in the countryside. William Hamilton Maxwell in his book *Wild Sports of the West* gives an account of a prolonged sporting expedition in Mayo in the late 1820s with his cousin, one of the minor gentry of the area. He brought with him from England the typical preconceptions of the time, but was soon enraptured by the wild landscape, and fascinated by the character and stories of the locals he encountered. 'I carried prejudices as unfair as they were unfavourable [but] found my estimate of their character false, for kindnesses were returned tenfold and the native outbreaks of

Milesian hospitality met me at every step.<sup>7</sup> Maxwell had a good time; the shooting was excellent, and the party which accompanied the travellers included a piper. On a typical evening 'the piper is merrily at work, for some of the peasant girls have come to visit us, attracted by the joyful news that a "pieberagh" was included in our suite. The fondness of these mountain maidens for dancing is incredible; at times of festival, on the occasion of a wedding, or "dragging-home", or whenever a travelling musician passes through these wilds, they assemble from prodigious distances and dance for days and nights together.' This entertainment was an almost nightly occurrence and Maxwell and his cronies jigged and danced with the best of them, although they lacked the stamina of the locals. Poteen and piping did not always mix and 'the piper, whose notes for the last half-hour had been exceedingly irregular, now evinced unquestionable symptoms of being "done up"'. Instead of the lightsome and well-sustained jig, strange and dolorous noises issued from the chanter, and as one of the fair sex observed... "a body could no more dance to his music than do the Patre o'Pee to a coronach at a wake"'. This 'Patre O'Pee' is mentioned several times in the book as a dance requiring a certain amount of accomplishment. It is almost certainly a corruption of the French 'Battre au pied' an ancestor of the 'Batter' still to be found in the West, and another indication of the influence of French dancing masters at the time.

This enthusiasm for dancing apparently waned suddenly in the next decade. Thirteen years after Maxwell visited Mayo, the Halls on their journey around Ireland observed a dramatic decline in music, dancing and drinking which they attributed to the growth of the Temperance Societies which had burgeoned since Catholic Emancipation in 1830. They encountered a piper at Kincora who was 'wrathful exceedingly on two or three points; the decay of mountain stills, the decline of dancing, and departure of all spirit out of the hearts of "the boys" and, above all, the introduction of "brass bands" from which was to be dated the ruin of Ireland'.<sup>8</sup> The Halls' attitude was ambiguous: they avowed on the one hand that temperance had 'completely changed the Irish character... there is little of that humour and love of fun, considered to be inherent in an Irishman, now perceptible, a silent and apparently sullen manner has taken the place of wit and devilry' but they approved nonetheless. 'These "brass bands" are becoming nearly as numerous as the branches of the Temperance Society; and we hope they will increase, for the wonderful change that has been wrought in the habits of the people has, unquestionably, driven the piper and the fiddler out of fashion.' One gets the feeling that perhaps Mr and Mrs Hall were not completely in accord, for the enthusiastic main narrative is accompanied by a whining continuo in the footnote section urging hideous reforms on the masses. To substitute for music, dancing and drinking, for example, the peasantry were to have 'humble assembly rooms in the principal towns... for wholesome entertainment', which was to include the provision of 'such books as they will read, and will be permitted to read'.

Despite these and later vicissitudes, dancing has remained up to the present day a very popular pastime in many parts of rural Ireland, but dancing to traditional music which was popular up to the 1940s and even later, has now been almost completely superseded by modern dancing to the music of that peculiarly Irish phenomenon, the Showband, whose stock-in-trade is a lugubrious hybrid Irish/American country music, mixed with current 'pop' material. Perhaps one of the reasons for the waning popularity of traditional dancing is that it has tended, in some quarters, to be taken too seriously and promoted as an avowal of our 'National Identity' by cultural groups, rather than as entertainment. This attitude probably accounts for the dour, stiff-armed style of official traditional dancing, and the puritanical suppression by the clergy of



cross-roads dancing also helped its decline. Donal O'Sullivan had this to say about it in 1952: 'It has become stylized through the intrusion of the competitive element and to that extent has ceased to be creative... Folk dancing at its best is not a gymnastic exercise but an individual expression of rhythmic vitality...' <sup>9</sup> He also has hard words to say about the neo-Celtic excesses of costume. 'Whatever one's opinion of this ensemble from an aesthetic standpoint, there is no question but that it is completely spurious, and the fact that it is recognized as such when our dances go abroad does no good to the national reputation.' While there is a move back towards dancing for the sheer enjoyment of it, it remains at the moment largely competitive, the domain of scrubbed children in their Sunday best grimly footing it out for the gratification of doting parents. Most of the older musicians recorded in this book learned their music playing for country dances, which by their accounts were spirited and jolly affairs, and in their opinion the music loses a great deal played outside this context. Dancing provided a rhythmic backbone, and it is hard to imagine that the music, which owes so much in its development to dancing, will not change radically in character without it.



Woodcut (School of Bewick).

Traditional Irish music is enjoying an unprecedented popularity at the moment, but its fortunes have waxed and waned greatly over the past 150 years. The Great Famine of the 1840s and the subsequent emigrations devastated Irish country life, and although old ways and customs persisted in some areas (and still do: hence our reason for compiling this book) they were greatly diminished in extent and vigour. The music was neglected so that the great collectors of the later nineteenth century, Petrie, Joyce and O'Neill felt that they were noting down something which would shortly disappear for ever, and O'Curry could lament, 'Oh! why do not Irishmen cultivate, encourage, cherish and hoard up in their innermost souls the priceless treasure of... their matchless music...' <sup>10</sup> Efforts at revival usually sought to force the music into the mould of conventional Victorian 'good taste' rather than to encourage its native vigour. The Gaelic League revivalists at the turn of the century could be satisfied only by an immediate connection between the surviving folk music and the distant Celtic past, and tried to establish across the intervening centuries a direct provenance at the Gaelic courts. The Celtic Twilight of the contemporary literary movement added a further degree of mystification, and the result was a romantic but sanctimonious view of folk culture which had little or no basis in reality. There is a grim-faced piety which is still met with occasionally among organizers of traditional music events, although rarely among the musicians themselves. At this period folk-songs rounded by generations were effete rewritten by poets and the harp reappeared as a gut-strung but nonetheless gutless instrument suitable only for accompanying debased versions of the original songs. Yeats intoning to the psaltery was a far cry from the Kiltartan cross-roads dance.

In the first fifty years of the twentieth century Ireland continued to exist very much on the fringe of industrial Europe. The levelling and brutalizing effects of the two Great Wars had little effect on the country. The First World War eradicated almost all remaining vestiges of rural folk culture in many countries of north-western Europe but in Ireland the struggle for Independence which culminated in the early 1920s forced the Irish public again to re-examine their identity, and there was a great revival of interest in native culture both North and South, an important part of which was the indigenous music. However by the end of the Second World War, cinema, records and the radio had finally established the primacy of American-based pop music as the popular music of Ireland as well as the rest of Europe.

Of the influences on traditional music in the twentieth century, gramophone records and the radio have probably had a greater effect than any other single factor. The mass media is, however, viewed with mixed feeling by many musicians, for while it has re-popularized and spread the music, it nonetheless has tended to unify the style and repertoire of players, and the subsequent loss of regional variations is greatly felt as it is precisely in this direction that much of the interest of traditional music lies. The influence of the records of Michael Coleman, and of other much-recorded artists such as Séan Maguire has been enormous, and in our travels we met more than one musician who had given up playing after hearing one or other virtuoso on record, maintaining that he could never hope to be as 'good' himself. If current trends continue the performance of traditional music will adapt more and more to the 'pop' music pattern, with star instrumentalists and groups spreading the music through concerts, broadcasts and records and with amateurs imitating the currently fashionable sounds rather than learning the style and repertoire of their own locality. One does not wish to turn back the clock, and indeed current re-interpretations of traditional music are often vital and exciting, but it is essential that the richness and diversity of the local music which belongs to the days before the mass media should be recorded before it vanishes, for when it goes, it will be forever.

There has been a shameful official neglect of some of our best traditional musicians, many of whom have been forced to work abroad in menial jobs for a living. O'Curry's reproof written in 1873: 'Why have we banished to contempt and poverty the ever good-humoured and often talented... wandering professors of this, the proudest inheritance of our ancient heritage'<sup>11</sup> still rings true today, although some would maintain that the stifling effects of official patronage would have a worse effect on the music than official neglect. Although many cultural organisations and persistent individuals in the national radio and elsewhere deserve the credit for the current revival of interest in the music, a greater debt is owed to the individual musicians who kept the music alive when its popularity was at its lowest. They did so often despite the contempt and open derision of neighbours whose slavish idea of progress and modernity meant the rejection of anything to do with their own past.

Collecting the material for this book could not, from my point of view, properly be called work. Travelling the countryside with a good friend, while he recorded and I drew, listening to the stories and the intricate music, occasionally making music ourselves in country pubs or welcoming kitchens, these are pursuits which I would gladly engage in without any goal. We travelled over the wild, dark hills of Donegal, my mother's country, and (with some trepidation) through the troubled backroads of Tyrone and Fermanagh. The going was occasionally rough but we were welcomed and fed wherever we went, for hospitality is as natural to the people of these Northern counties as their courtesy and good humour.

Allen Feldman speaks in his text of the sense of completeness and self-sufficiency

possessed by the musicians we met, a knowledge of their own worth that set them apart from their fellows. In an effort to respond to this I tried to avoid any obliqueness in the drawings, any so-called 'candid' secrecy in the photographs, because for these musicians, so rich in their own art, additional artifice seemed unnecessary and exaggeration certainly out of place. In the case of the photographs particularly, by allowing the subject to compose himself and to address the camera, I hoped that he could partly penetrate the impersonal, mechanical barrier of the medium and establish a communication with the reader. In all the drawings and photographs I have tried to present these musicians, now our friends, just as they are. More would have been superfluous.

*Eamonn O'Doherty*

#### REFERENCES TO INTRODUCTION

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Gaelic singer and  
fiddler Sean  
McAloon and his  
wife Mary,  
Silverhill, Co  
Donegal





# THE FIDDLER AND COLLECTOR

— 1 —

The project of recording, interviewing and making a visual record of fiddlers from Donegal and Tyrone was undertaken with the awareness that one of the central conditions for the development of Irish traditional music was geographical isolation within the country itself. The physical separation of Ireland from the European mainland has been considered a major contributing factor towards the existence of an Irish rural culture persevering into present times; an archaic material culture, a lifestyle and art forms long since extinct in continental Europe. This 'island' concept can be expanded to include the many 'islands' of musical tradition that flourished by virtue of geographical boundaries within Ireland itself. It is this plurality of related vocal and instrumental traditions that forms the varied mosaic of native Irish music.

In recent years the extinction of rural life style and the presence of an urban-based folk revival have obscured this regional identity and as a consequence these developments have delayed an historical and aesthetic awareness of the importance of regional musical traditions. Influenced by an orientation towards a national identity and by commercialisation, an Irish national folk music has come into existence. This cultural development with the assistance of the media, cultural organisations, and an incipient 'star system' has precipitated a centralisation of musical style and repertoire.

The regrettable nature of this pattern lies not only in the blurring and erasure of diverse local traditions within Ireland, but in its occurrence at a time when the rural population of Ireland is experiencing a severe identity crisis due to depopulation, economic change and exposure to contemporary European mass culture. The material presented in this book is an attempt to recover a fragment of the submerged regional history of traditional Irish music. Against this background of blatant indoctrination of the rural population in the values of Anglo-European urban mass culture, it is hoped that in a small way the material presented here can respond to the need for an indigenous revival of regional culture and identity.

The history of the regional musical culture of Ireland is not a static one. There has always been a struggle to maintain the tradition against pressures such as colonisation, depopulation, cultural suppression and economic deprivation. There were changes in style and instrumentation, and alteration of repertoire. The intensity of involvement of the rural community in its own musical traditions varied, and was always subject to the vicissitudes of history and social change. At times the music and dance was the

Johnny Comac,  
Dungannon, Co  
Tyrone



major aesthetic expression and recreational activity of the rural populace. In other periods, in times of severe economic deprivation, political repression and social disorder, and survival of the music rested in the hands of a small number of travelling professional musicians and dancing masters governed by a pride in their skill and dependent on their music for a livelihood. Added to this group was the isolated artist in the rural community who held onto this important part of his identity as the cultural life of the community fell into dissolution.

The testimony of the musicians interviewed in our collecting indicates that though the music and dance were a popular art form, the tradition's ultimate continuity depended on the single-minded commitment of a few gifted musicians deeply involved in a classical consciousness of form and style that the inherited body of music conveyed to them. The musical tradition was an oral tradition. It depended on the transmission of knowledge and technique from one person to another, and the apathy of a single generation would have been enough to destroy the music. Conversely the enthusiasm and native talent of a single generation would have been sufficient to foster a renaissance and guarantee the survival of the tradition for the future.

Today as the 'islands' of musical tradition are all but rendered extinct as a consequence of the cultural centralisation and growing modernity of contemporary Ireland, the survival function of the musical tradition becomes more sharply defined. What is documented in these pages is an ancient response to an inevitable historical occurrence. To resist change is a strategy for change in itself. The persistence of traditional fiddling in an alien cultural environment implies a change in that tradition. The fiddlers dealt with in these pages can be classified according to their geographical origins as 'Donegal', 'Tyrone'. But these geographical origins are historical references, they tell us what was, not what is. The historical regional isolation of the musical tradition has been transformed into the individualised isolation of the lone musician. Regional music has survived because these musicians have survived with their musical identity intact. These musicians separated themselves from the momentum of pseudo-urbanity that flooded their world and destroyed the lifestyle upon which the activity of music-making was based. In making this choice, the music was appropriated by a more personalised tradition. But this ownership of the tradition by a few isolated, ageing men is also haunted by the richness and fecund associations of the music's past and the uncertainty of its future.

— 2 —

Collecting traditional music in this context is a journey through a fragmented world, a search for a culture that is on the defensive. One can have few illusions concerning the internal integrity of the traditional lifestyle. The roofless shells of farmhouses, the rusted gates made from decayed bed-frames opening out onto the emptiness of Neolithic bog, the receding cultivation line are indicative of the broken geometry of the traditional culture. These items of our landscape, the final remnants of human pattern and creation delineate a temporality and a psychic space distinct from the world we belong to. As collectors, we are separated from the men who inhabit this space by the very fact of the cultural fragmentation they have experienced. They are possessed by a temporality that is inaccessible to us except through their music and memory.

Ruined farmhouse  
in the deserted  
village of Port, Co  
Donegal



The fundamental contradiction in our collecting journey lies in the fact that we were attempting to mediate our discontinuity with the products of the very technology that contributed to the cultural fragmentation of rural society.

It is impossible to avoid the realisation that collecting is part of the wounding process our society has inflicted on traditional culture. Contemporary civilization has destroyed their present and as an extension of this decimation we arrived with tape recorders and cameras to lay claim to their past. Collecting as a reflex to the death of a traditional society is a search within a cultural mirror that reflects more the need of and values of modern civilisation than it does the realities of the traditional culture. The relationship of the informant and collector can replicate the unequal and exploitative interactions between modern and folk cultures. In the context of interpersonal relationships the collector is imprisoned by a methodology and techniques that will not only determine what he finds in a particular environment but also controls how he acts in the field.

No act of the collector is neutral or without valuation. In his gathering of material the collector is ultimately an extension of the process whereby a dominant and alien culture appropriates the resources of another society. For the collector involved in the process of acquisition there is only one fundamental question — what, if anything at all, of value has he to contribute to those who will be his informants. The answer to that question will determine what response the collector will find to his search in a particular culture.

The collector enters into the traditional culture in search of facts and documentation, while in their turn the participants of a traditional society are more concerned with symbolic exchange and initiation rituals. In a traditional culture the process of ritual exchange that is necessary to interpersonal encounters is of more concern than what is actually exchanged. For the men we recorded, the sociality of the moment created by a music session is of the same value as the actual music played, and certainly of greater value than the music recorded. This conflict of intentions, if unrecognised, inevitably leads to mutual misperceptions. As a consequence, throughout our journey we were pursued by a sense of vampirism. We resisted transforming friendships into documents. Eventually our ambivalence produced a crisis of method and motive that we found difficult to resolve.

Once at a session we had arranged, an aged fiddler of frail health and great skill and knowledge collapsed in his chair from the effect of too much drink supplied by a neighbour. One moment he was capering a light dance step, the next moment he sagged like the bellows of an accordion with a look of immense weariness on his face. For an instant we thought him dead. As he was given food and tea, another neighbour put on a loud chaffing record of a modern 'pop'-orientated fiddler to cover the absence of music. He was being polite, but we experienced the scene as a nightmare metaphor for the contemporary predicament of traditional music: the living reality replaced by a creation of the media. We had seen the life go out of a great musician, glimpsed his death, and the same thought eats away at both our minds. We ask ourselves if our presence here is the last stage in the final draining away of the tradition. For the first time it comes to us that there is an intimate association between collecting and death. We have deluded ourselves that we are fighting death, but instead we are documenting it. We are the pall-bearers at a funeral of a man, a music, an entire world. The photographer caps his lens, the tape machine is disconnected, and we leave shaking and guilty...

On another occasion we returned to a house where we had gathered a great deal of music. We returned to play back tapes and show the fiddlers the photographs that had

Mrs Michael  
Doherty listening  
to a recording of  
John Doherty



been taken. In the midst of our display of the material gathered in our previous visit, the mood of the fiddlers turned sullen and withdrawn; they showed no further interest in the photos or in listening to the recordings of their music. Their usual good humour returned when we persuaded them to take up their fiddles. It was only as we drove away that we realised how our technology had betrayed us. For it was through our technology — the cameras and tape machines — that we flooded these fiddlers with too much personal feedback.

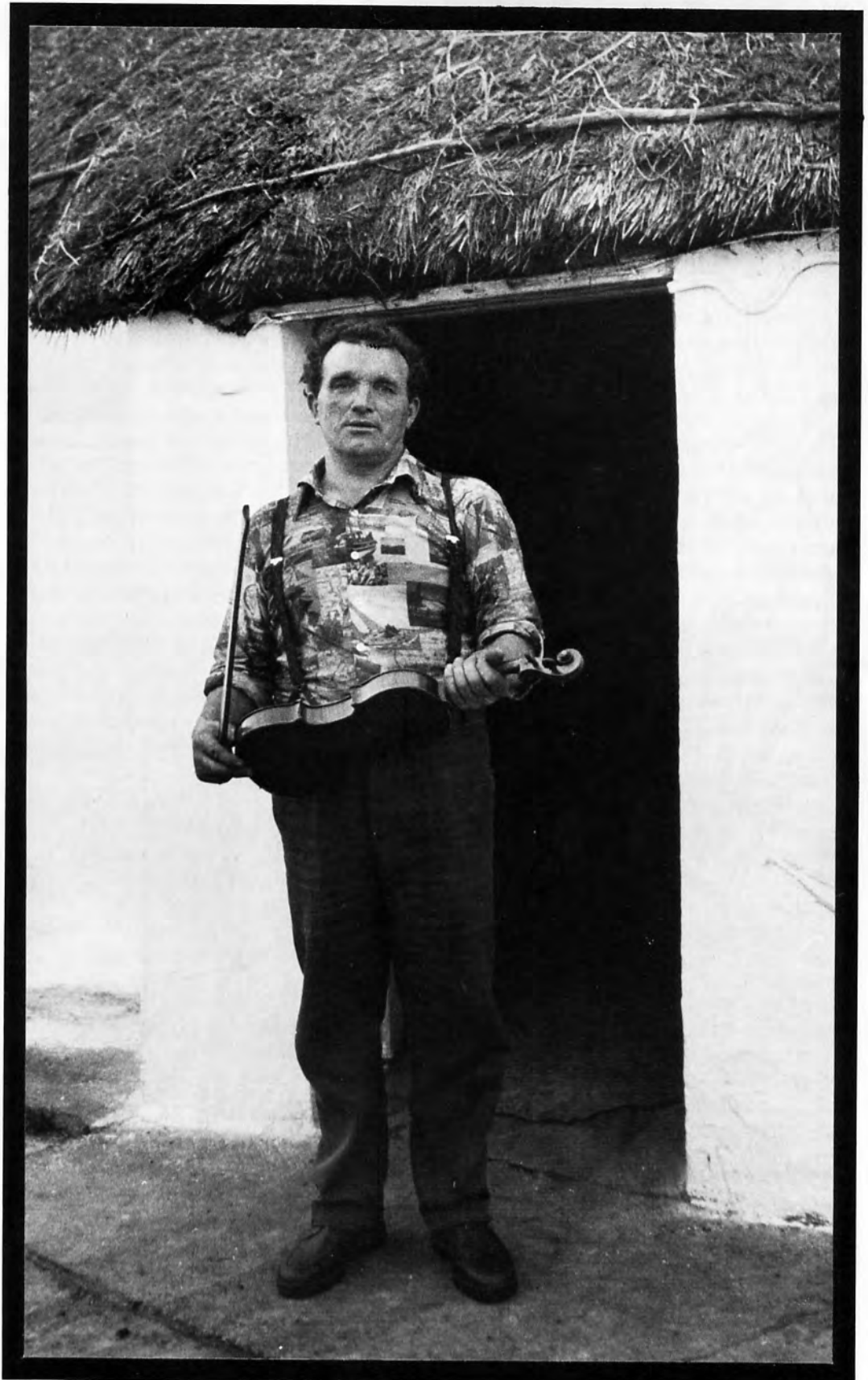
Oral cultures have never developed the same capacity for self dissection and information retrieval that our society has. Instead they build holistic visions of the world and self where image and experience are intertwined. In many societies to separate image or sound from experience — its context — constitutes a violation of the natural order. Probably if presented separately our photos and tapes would not have threatened these men. Presented together they formed a synthesis, a technological reconstruction of the self, a travesty of real existence. We had returned to their house with a collation of abstractions and fragments that challenged the way they saw themselves and heard their music.

Within oral cultures music is strongly connected with personal experience with a specific sense of time and place. Music always appears in context — in relation to another experience, people and geographical locations. To separate music from its context is to separate it from its magical power to affect reality. Some American Indian tribes refuse to have their songs and chants taped, for they believe that to remove music from the place where it was composed and sung constitutes a loss of personal power; a draining away of the magic associated with the music. This belief is operative in some form or other in the majority of oral cultures and eventually determined our own approach to gathering music.

The intensity and beauty of our encounters in Donegal and Tyrone with traditional musicians had such a vivid effect on us that we became afraid of the capacity our technology had to de-realise our experience, the power it possessed to come between ourselves and what we felt at the time of the session. Personal experience began to assume a primacy over documenting. We became caught between documenting and experiencing. This bifurcation of roles was not only the result of an ethical dilemma, but was inherent in the basic characteristics of traditional music itself, which is not essentially a performance medium, with a strict separation between artist and audience. In its original setting traditional music was a social art, where listeners or dancers and players created a single emotional space, a collective theatre, completely inner-directed. This experience of a magic circle, a space separate from day to day reality, recurred in most of our sessions. To record or photograph in this situation implied a stepping out of this circle. To remove ourselves from the circle was to break a vital link between us and the musicians who, because of years of musical isolation, required a high level of emotional response from the people they gave their music to. Interpersonal relationship became the nexus through which we gathered our material. When to turn the tape machine on became a moral as well as a strategic decision. Each tune recorded was the product of many that were not.

We never resolved the conflict over our methodology, and we walked a fine line between two approaches. Aesthetically and ethically we had no choice. We were attempting to satisfy the value systems of two cultures. In South-west Donegal we found our own special myth, one that demonstrated the type of understanding the fiddlers possibly had of our journey. This story follows the pattern of many folk tales inasmuch as the moral is never fully demonstrated.

Rumours have spread through the parish of a stranger who wanders the roads,



Eddie Doherty



9/15 Franice Quinn

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knocking on the doors of any who have a reputation as a fiddler. Under his arm wrapped in a blanket he carries what he claims is a priceless fiddle. At each house he approaches the fiddler, asks the man to play his 'Stradivarius', and solicits the fiddler's opinion of the instrument. The stranger himself denies any skill at music, which arouses the suspicion of the local people. After he hears each man to his satisfaction, he takes back the fiddle, wraps it in the blanket and proceeds down the road to the next musician. He finally arrives at the door of one of the finest fiddlers in the parish. This fiddler has heard of the stranger's pilgrimage and his denial of musical skill. When offered the fiddle he carefully feels the strings, fingerboard and bowhair. He then asks the man if he plays himself. The stranger denies it. 'Well, I doubt that,' replies the fiddler, 'judging from the heat that is on the bow and strings I reckon it's been played within the last five minutes.' The stranger grabs the violin away from the fiddler at the same time saying, 'If you're that good I don't want to hear you!' and disappears down the road!

The story's ending is flat, the value judgment is hidden and the tale's dryness has a didactic effect. Within the value system of rural Donegal the stranger is spiritually sterile. He insists on a social relationship with the musicians. He exploits his ownership of a rare violin, the product of the skills and techniques of his own society, to obtain music from the local musicians. His identity seems not to be invested in his musical skill, which he lies about, but in his ownership of the instrument. He is incapable of music himself, or worse still of sharing it with others. In this context his nomadicism is judged as a symptom of spiritual unrest.

This tale is a subtle and sophisticated social commentary, revealing many attitudes concerning the relationship between traditional music and the world external to the traditional society. For ourselves, the collectors, it raised spectres concerning our own roles and attitudes for which we tried to find alternatives, but from which we found there was no escape.

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The motifs of the tale of the wandering stranger with a superior instrument is based on historical fact. One hundred and fifty to two hundred years ago good fiddles were extremely scarce in many parts of rural Ireland. Introduced into Ireland sometime in the eighteenth century from Britain and the continent, the violin has remained for many decades an import: an artifact of foreign technical skill. Although in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Irish rural communities were rich in crafts, no indigenous schools of violin making arose to supply the fiddlers of rural Ireland with instruments. In many regions violins of whatever quality were hard to find. Many fiddlers often had to learn on home-made box fiddles or tin fiddles made by travelling tinsmith-musicians who were probably responsible for the initial introduction of the fiddle into local musical traditions. In many communities, until they produced their own local musicians, there was a dependence on these travelling fiddlers and pipers for instrumental music for the dances. Thus the violin for many years must have

been consciously associated with the technical expertise of the outside world. Complementary to this association was the fact that for many communities the knowledge of playing the fiddle was in the almost exclusive possession of these nomadic professionals.

As fiddling developed into an indigenous art form these associations may have been submerged, but they were also connected to other, older attitudes concerning the relationship between music and magic. The story of the magic owner of a valuable violin possesses all the motifs common to an entire myth cycle of legend concerning musicians, instruments, and ultimately magical experience. The encounter with a mysterious stranger and the presence of a special musical instrument is a common theme in this repertoire of tales that establishes a close relationship between musicians and the supernatural. It is a myth cycle that taints the traditional fiddler and his instrument with a hidden otherness. These tales exist in part to account for the relationship between the musician and his own creative process and also as metaphors for the invisible power that music and musical instruments hold over the emotional life of men. Within this myth cycle the traditional musician is signified as a magnetic pole for supernatural experience. He is sought out by the Other World which sometimes desires his services, but more commonly uses him as a medium through which the Other World can introduce its music to the world of men. They are mainly stories concerning the experiences of musicians with the Other Worldly reality of faeries, banshees and ghosts. In the West of Clare a drowned man lilt a complex, eerie reel to his comrades at sea. In Donegal a fiddler spends a night following a banshee from place to place in a lonely park to learn the lament she is singing. Again in Donegal a ghostly piper haunts the hideout of a poteen-making fiddler playing again and again a certain tune. The brewer only escapes when he pours the contents of his still on the ground in front of his hideout as a sacrifice to the haunt. He returns without any liquor but with the music. In Fanad a fiddler extracts a tune from the beating of his horse's hooves in flight from a strange night creature.

The belief concerning the intimacy of music and magical experience is based on the central part traditional music could play in community life and ritual. The fiddlers' own role within the community was shamanistic. The role of the musician, singer and storyteller was to maintain the emotional and intellectual centre of the community. The period of greatest musical activity in most communities occurred during the long nights of mid-winter. Dances would last from sunset to sunrise and would often go on for days in succession. In exile from the forces of growth and fertility it was a time for the community to celebrate its own continuity. It was the fiddler or piper who replicated the movements of death, rebirth, the seasonal cycles in the movement of his music and the interlocking chain of dance and melody. It was the musician who was central to the creation of the sacred space within which the dancers could celebrate communal identity in ecstasy.

The Fiddler was the mediator of the visible and the invisible, a releaser of emotions, memory and inhibitions. He was also master of the past and future and as a consequence was connected with one of the major concerns of any oral culture — a sense of continuity. If traditional music is considered as a form of inherited knowledge, the musician possessed the emotional and aesthetic history of his culture in his music. Conversely, through his skill and expertise, the traditional musician also possessed a cultural code which made accessible to him the aesthetic forms and structures through which the rural community could find a viable medium for continued self expression either as dancers or musicians. The music conferred identity on a vastly decentralised culture; it was history translated into sound. This is why personalised oral transmission

of the musical tradition from members of one generation to another was a crucial process in the life of the rural community. This spontaneous transfer of the oral tradition between generations connected the community with its own history. It was a process that guaranteed the community's capacity to symbolise and celebrate its own existence through the concrete mediums of story-telling, music making and dance. When one generation rejected the skills and knowledge of the preceding generation a rift appeared within the fabric of rural identity.

— 4 —

The magic circle to all purposes is now broken. The community of players and dancers is dispersed. The men we met with are now alone, survivors of an inevitable historical process. The period between 1940 and 1965 witnessed the almost total extinction of traditional music as a community orientated activity. The steady growth of urbanised lifestyles, modern entertainment forms, consumer values, ideologies of national modernisation, the gradual assimilation into Anglo-European culture overwhelmed the social and economic life of the rural community. A new self-consciousness appeared to separate the people from the old practices. It was during this period that many musicians were confronted with a choice. With the erosion of communal values and activities they were forced to make the adjustment from music as a social practice and, in part, other-directed, to music as a purely personalised and solitary art form.

Many of the elements that determined the nature of the decision in either direction — to play the music or to give it up — were culturally determined. But ultimately it was left to the individual musician to respond to these determinants in his own way. This was because there was an inherent dualism in the musician's cultural role, a dualism that allowed for a variety of responses. The music was an eminently social and public art. Without community participation and without social legitimisation the act of playing lost meaning for many musicians. We found in Donegal and Tyrone no correlation between levels of musical skill and commitment to continued playing. Many a noted musician stopped and many a mediocre musician kept at the music. When one talks to some of the men who gave up the music one gets the feeling they were embarrassed into silence. For them there was no conscious choice — the dancing stopped so they stopped playing. They possess only vague reasons for their decision and often talk about their musical activity as the actions of another person, part of the naivety and enthusiasm of youth. This last reason is significant — fiddling is often looked upon by these men as frivolous, as a misspent use of valuable economic time. This revaluation of time, which accompanied the growing functionalism of rural society, was the result of that society's contact with the mechanised world. It indicates that the rejection of the music and dance tradition was part of a general desymbolising of rural culture, and a rejection by a new generation of cyclical time based on seasonal change for the linear temporality of modern industrial society and the market economy.



The loss of cultural ego is one of the tragedies of traditional music in Ireland and as destructive as emigration and death. During our journey we were made to feel constantly aware of those men still living that we couldn't hear play. Their musical absence troubled the thoughts of the few fiddlers still active. Nowhere do you receive that final sense of a lost community more than when a fiddler points to a cluster of inhabited cottages and says, 'There used to be twelve fiddlers in those houses; now there are none.' It was this disturbed awareness that brought home to us the choice each active fiddler had made to stay with his craft in the face of social and artistic isolation.

There were many factors inherent in the tradition to foster an individual musician's resistance to the de-culturalisation process. As possessor of an archaic skill transmitted through a long line of musical contacts ultimately originating outside his immediate community, many a musician, like any artist, did not see himself as completely integrated with his community and saw no reason to follow certain social practices or adopt particular attitudes just because his peers did so. The Irish tradition is essentially conservative, the majority of its stylistic elements and repertoire having been created by preceding generations. This established a strong tie with the past for the musician. Furthermore the orientation in Irish music has always been on the soloist; ensemble playing was not a strong practice in Ireland. Thus the emphasis on the music is on the master musician who can engrave his own distinct identity on the repertoire through superior technique and inventiveness. The tradition of the virtuoso, possibly an inheritance from the ancient harpers, coexisted with the communitarian functions of the music. It was this ethic of musical individualism that provided many players with a self-perpetuating impetus to continue playing in the face of social indifference.

In all this again there was no deliberate self-conscious decision-making process. The men we met with continued to be involved in traditional music because it was inconceivable for them to stop; it is their friends and neighbours they cannot comprehend. The fiddlers we collected from view the turning away of the country folk from traditional music as a deviation, and the forms of entertainment that replaced country house dancing as inferior. It is one of the tragic contradictions of the situation — that many of their peers would agree with the fiddlers' opinion and yet the country house dancing ceased. It was as if a centre of the culture had vanished and its participants were left on the periphery without comprehension of the process they had undergone.

With the advent of technology and a market economy the ritualistic gregariousness of the rural community greatly diminished. House visiting or *ceidhling* has become much less frequent, and the roads, once a social milieu as well as a medium of travel, became desolate except for the passing car. Television and the automobile have caused a massive privatisation of the once strongly communal life style. An integral part of the confusion concerning cultural identity is this final introduction of urban loneliness.

The archetypal role of the shaman is to maintain the spiritual centre of the community through story, music, and dance even when the community itself has turned from that centre. He is not chosen by the community for the role, nor does he choose himself to be a shaman — he is a captive of his art, as one fiddler puts it 'You must have the craving to play.' The men we met with are the relentless practitioners of a centuries-old art that outlives the world that gave it existence. They are the survivors of this death and it is as survivors that they must be understood. The old role of mediating between worlds — the imaginative and the real — has been enlarged for them. Today they exist as an important bridge between two cultures, living completely in neither.



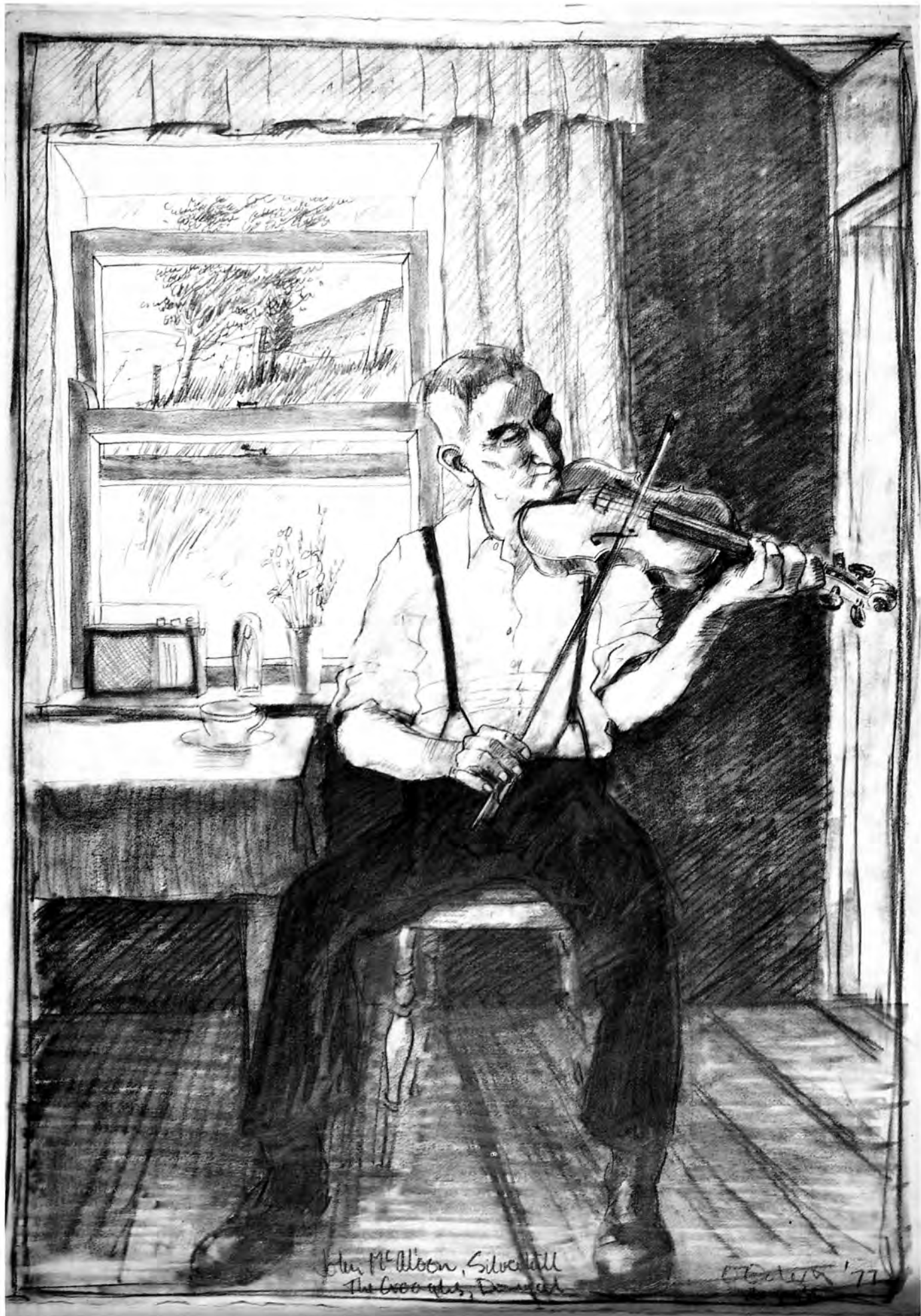


The revival of interest in traditional music that has occurred in urban Ireland within the last ten years has ironically not ended the musical isolation of the players we recorded; in fact it has deepened their sense of separation and may have put the final touches on the extinction of regional style and repertoire. As a phenomenon of bourgeois society and in some cases nationalistic aspirations, folk revivals are often highly selective as to which particular aspects of traditional culture they choose to resurrect. They are quick to develop their own mythologies concerning the traditional culture. It can be argued that folk revivals constitute the only viable form through which traditional arts can survive in modern society, but they are also an extension of the exploitation of traditional societies. By virtue of the media and cultural organisations the folk revivals can feed distorted cultural images back into that traditional society which was the original source. This arbitrary aesthetic and historical judgment possesses a level of legitimacy and public recognition that is denied the actual culture and thereby assumes enormous destructive possibilities in relation to that culture.

Competitions which are biased towards certain instrumental styles, media that concentrate on the traditions of certain regions at the expense of others, and the transformation of the music into a professionalised commercial performance medium, contribute to the estrangement of the older rural musicians. The milieu of the younger contemporary traditional musician — the festivals, competitions, and concert performances — is a far cry from the country house dances and alien to the social experience of most of the musicians we met with. There has been a tremendous change of the social context of the music and the folk revival has unconsciously compounded this situation by developing into an a-historical movement ignorant of the importance of regional styles. It has taken for granted, as totally authoritative, a national style of music that has been compounded out of the Sligo and Clare traditions. Much of the repertoire and fiddling styles of Ulster challenge certain assumptions concerning the nature of Irish fiddling as characterised by the more familiar Connacht tradition. Because of the strong regional divergences found in parts of Ulster, the traditions there have been dismissed as Scottish, and as non-Irish. It is perhaps this indiscriminate and inaccurate superimposition of a political concept on an extremely diverse and varied cultural reality that reveals the central failing of the revival. Instead of acknowledging the rich diversity of the collective tradition, especially in instrumental music, it has arbitrarily concentrated on the popularised traditions of Sligo and Clare as the mean by which all other traditions are evaluated — and at times dismissed. This has led to a uniformity of style and repertoire among the new generation of fiddlers that was not present in the older regional traditions.

For the fiddlers of Donegal and Tyrone that we encountered, the folk revival is an episode, a part of the massive transition that they have experienced in recent decades. They witnessed the rejection of the music and culture in the name of modernisation, sophistication, and potential economic improvement. Now from the cities and from the young echo back the sounds of a music that was on the verge of extinction. The tradition has skipped a generation and the old-timers have much to offer the new generation of musicians. The younger generation in turn is in a position to alleviate the now habitual isolation of the musicians. The special circle of an aesthetic of community long broken, can be reconnected.

For ourselves, the collectors, who had crossed over into another world, we had come to recover what we felt was a magical and mythic past. We encountered instead a magical present. As we walked down the lanes to their houses, the fiddlers gave us welcomes rich in warmth and hospitality. They were generous with their lives, as they were with their music. They were delighted with our presence but not surprised.



Fiddles would appear suddenly, taken from the tops of dressers, or removed from the interior depths of worn jackets. The straight back chair would be drawn from the corner and placed in the centre of the room. Their movements were slow, and ritualistic, there was no hurry, no urgency — here time ended. Spending the endless summer twilight in darkening kitchens, the light to be switched on only at the last moment before total darkness, the corners of the room deepening into caverns, they played out their lives and their music with the gentle intensity of those who practice a complex art alone.



John Roberts. Jack of Queens Ballytofer 29-6-77  
O Roberts '77

# ON THE ROAD

## Taped talk with John Doherty.

— 1 —

'My father was a great man for horses — for ponies. He would send me out to herd the ponies, that was my job — of course, that was after school hours... I would give an account of where and how they were — I would take a hand at other little things such as some sort of handicraft. I'd find myself always employed at something. If I were to hear a lot of street musicians coming into town here, I would leave whatever I could be at and I wouldn't care, I'd come the whole way to hear what they were able to play. I would indeed! They were travelling fiddle players and they were very good indeed. They'd hail somehow from those counties Antrim and Derry. When they would come into town to play the fiddle you might ask me to do anything else but to come into town and to listen to them...

'In my house then of course there were bagpipes and fiddles. But they never liked the accordion. My father when he played the pipes would go outside and play a few marches and he would step up and down and him playing... If you heard him play on the Scotch pipes it would bring your heart back. On the fiddle he would play a piece of music arranged on the pipes and would play in the same style as the chanter. In a way of playing a reel, that's when he was in good humour, he could make the point of the bow whistle. Oh lord, he could strike great power into it! Once when he would leave down the pipes, some of the boys would take two fiddles and begin to play. Ah, gracious hour, it was a great time of music. But that was just in one townland and there would be townlands for miles around where there would be no music at all... I didn't regard myself able to play for a dance or for any public amusement till I was over twenty years of age. Until then I was a bit shy. I was beginning to try the fiddle when I was sixteen — but I had no success that time. If I went wrong my father would chastise me there and then. He would give me a middlin' sharp condown for not doin' the thing right. That would make me a little more keen you know... I would listen to a tune... I would get the impression of it in my mind and maybe at three o'clock in the morning I'd wake up and I could go into it a good bit. I just only wanted to get the symptoms of the tune and I had it.

'My grandfather Simon Doherty was a good player, on my mother's side, my grandfather Patrick McConnell and his sons were good fiddlers. All our family played. Michael Gallagher my cousin played the pipes — he would keep the people amused whether he played music or not. He told some funny yarns altogether and it was all about what happened to himself. He would never use nobody else's name. Oh no, no — poor Michael Gallagher.'



Around about 1895 John Doherty was born into a family of travelling musicians and tinsmiths based in Finntown, Co Donegal. He was heir, through his family, to a musical legacy extending back at least to the eighteenth century, beginning with his great-grandfather Hugh Doherty who played the fiddle as well as the uilleann and Highland bagpipes. His great-grandmother, Nannie Rua Mac Sweeney, was a famous singer and lilter, of the same family that produced one of the master uilleann pipers of Ireland, Turlough MacSweeney. There exists a strong tradition of fiddling and piping that runs through three generations of the Dohertys. Genealogical material supplied by John Doherty dealing with the period between the late eighteenth and early twentieth century, reveals a total of seventeen instrumentalists and singers in the family tree. Of these musicians, fourteen were fiddlers, eight played the Highland pipes, three played the uilleann pipes and two were noted singers and lilters. There were six members of the family who were multi-instrumentalists playing both the fiddle and either the uilleann or Highland pipes, though John's great-grandfather and his grandfather, Simon, played all three instruments and they can be listed among the first generation of uilleann pipers. This incredible concentration of musicians in a single family produced a strong sense of musical continuity that underlies John Doherty's music with a historical authenticity, particularly in terms of his playing style and repertoire. The presence of the Highland pipes, which pre-dates both the fiddle and uilleann pipes in Irish musical history, implies that the actual family tradition may contain elements that originated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

No one knows for sure what the origins of the travelling musicians in Irish rural society were, though there are several historical patterns that can be pieced together to create a reasonable picture. In many cases they may have originated with the court musicians and clan pipers who went in exile to the peasantry when the old Gaelic order disintegrated. The fact that in the Doherty family there was a tradition of playing the Highland pipes might connect them with this theory, as the clan piper was possibly a hereditary position passed from father to son. Many travelling players were evicted farmers. It was also a common practice to train blind or otherwise handicapped children to become professional musicians, though this last reason does not seem to apply in the case of the Doherty family. The presence of the co-occupations of tinsmithing, horsetrading and saddling may indicate an even older clan origin to the family musical tradition.

From the early nineteenth century to well into the present century four families of travelling musicians, all of whom were related — the Dohertys, MacSweeneys, McConnells and Gallaghers — formed a highly skilled musical subculture which had an incalculable influence on the musical life of rural Donegal. Through their travels they continuously cross-fertilised the various local musical traditions of isolated farming communities in Donegal. They would travel from parish to parish, invited as honoured guests, from house to house supplying the music for big nights, 'house parties', penny dances and country fairs. The local musicians who were exposed to the music of the travellers were as quick to pick up the new tunes the travellers brought into a region as they were to absorb the cream of the indigenous music they encountered. As well as influencing their repertoire the travellers had an effect on the playing style and standards of the sedentary farmer/fiddlers. The average country fiddler was usually a part-time player, restricting his greatest playing activity to the idle winter months. At other times of the year he would only pick up his fiddler sporadically. His musical activity was tied to agrarian work cycles and often his hands were brutalised by the nature of his work.

The travelling families of the Dohertys, MacSweeneys, McConnells and Gallaghers,

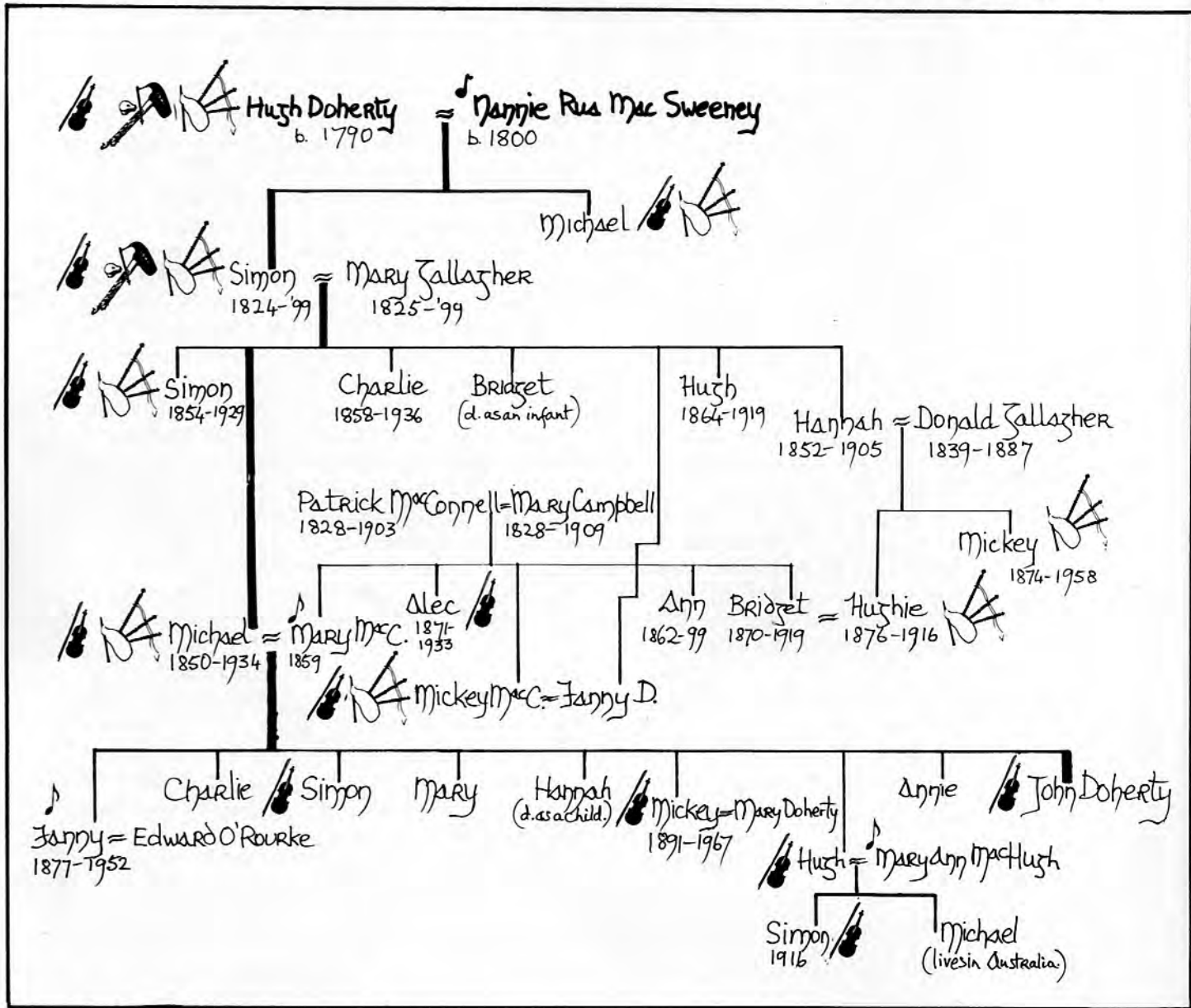
Kilcar, Co  
Donegal

in contrast, were professional players involved possibly in relatively light handiwork such as tinsmithing, and their economy was not tied to seasonal cycles. Therefore they had the time and opportunity to develop their music to a high degree of proficiency. They were also in continual contact with other players, whether sedentary players or other travelling musicians like themselves. As a result of these factors the travelling players might often have a wider range of music than the isolated farmer/fiddler. The farming communities of Donegal were by no means lacking in musical talent. South-west Donegal in particular was a fertile area for fiddling producing many virtuoso players such as John Mosey McGinley, and John Frank Cassidy. But all these players maintained close relationships with the travelling musicians.

Rather than constantly frequenting regions where there was a lack of fiddling and a market for their services, the Doherty and McConnell families gravitated to the musical parishes of Kilcar, Glencolumbkille and Ardara in South-west Donegal where they felt their music was more keenly understood and appreciated. The interactions of the travelling families and the local virtuosi developed fiddling in Donegal into a highly complex and exciting art form, with a wide range of tunes and a variety of playing styles. In Teelin, a small fishing village at the foot of Slieve League mountain, the visits of the Dohertys and the McConnells actually initiated a local tradition of fiddling. No one in Teelin can remember talk of fiddling in the village except for the two or three crude players until the time of the First World War, when half a dozen accomplished fiddlers began to play at the country house dances. These men had learned their fiddling either directly or indirectly from the McConnells or the Dohertys. The repertoire of the Teelin fiddlers mainly consisted of tunes learned from the travelling families as well as some tunes absorbed from the liting of the preceding generation of Teelin singers.



# MUSICAL GENEALOGY OF THE DOHERTY FAMILY



= played fiddle.    
 = played uilleann pipes.    
 = played Highland pipes.    
 = singer.

## MUSICAL ASSOCIATES

Fiddler Doyle b. 1815? F  
 Anthony Helferty b. 1820? F.  
 Paddy MacSweeney b. 1823?  
 Turlough MacSweeney H.P. and U.P.

John Quigley b. 1830? F.  
 Paddy Ban Quigley U.P.  
 John Mosey McGinley b. 1840? F.

HUGH DOHERTY b. 1790? d. ? Great-grandfather of John Doherty, a native of Dungloe, he played the fiddle, uilleann pipes and Highland bagpipes. He was probably among the first generation of uilleann pipers in Ireland. (The uilleann pipes were supposed to have developed into a recognisable form in the mid and late eighteenth century.)

NANNIE RUA MacSWEENEY b. 1800? d. ? The 'red-headed' wife of Hugh and a lineal descendant of the MacSweeney chieftains of Doe Castle. A native of the Dungloe area, she was a renowned singer and the source of many tunes found in the Doherty family repertoire, the most famous being 'MacSweeney's Lament'. As well as having two sons, Hugh and Michael, who were musicians, she was also the aunt of Turlough MacSweeney, the renowned travelling uilleann and Highland piper. The fiddling of Turlough MacSweeney's younger brother Paddy was a strong influence on John Doherty's playing.

SIMON DOHERTY b. 1824 d. 1899 Son of Hugh and a native of the Dungloe/Lettermacaward region, he played fiddle, uilleann pipes and Highland pipes. He married Mary Gallagher of Cloghaneely. They had seven children, Simon, Hugh, Charlie, Michael, Bridget, Fanny and Hannah.

MICHAEL DOHERTY b. 1820? d. ? Simon's elder brother, based in Ramelton, he was a bachelor who played the fiddle and Highland pipes.

MICHAEL DOHERTY b. 1850 Son of Simon and a native of Lettermacaward, who played the fiddle and the Highland pipes. He married Mary MacConnell of Ardara and they had nine children.

MARY McCONNELL b. 1859 d. ? Daughter of Patrick McConnell and Mary Campbell of Frosses who was known as a singer and lilter of dances. Mary McConnell was also the niece of John Quigly, a noted

fiddler from Dunkineely. (The McConnells, though based in Ardara at the time of Mary McConnell's marriage to Michael Doherty, were supposed to have originated either in the South-east part of Donegal, or in Fermanagh or Sligo.)

HANNAH DOHERTY b. 1852 d. 1905 Michael Doherty's sister, who married Donald Gallagher of Glenfin. They had two sons, Hugh and Michael, both of whom earned their livings as travelling Highland pipers.

HUGHIE GALLAGHER b. 1876 d. 1916 A player of the Highland pipes based in Ballybofey and Ardara, he married Bridget McConnell, the sister of Mary McConnell.

MICKEY GALLAGHER b. 1879 d. 1958 A younger brother of Hughie, who was a travelling piper. He played a regular circuit throughout South-west Donegal and was a strong influence on the music of that region. He is the source for many of the piping tunes played by the fiddlers of that region.

FANNY DOHERTY b. 1863 d. 1918 Sister of Michael Doherty who married Mickey McConnell.

MICKEY McCONNELL b. 1863 d. 1918. ALEC McCONNELL b. 1871 d. 1933 Both Mickey and Alec McConnell played the fiddle, and one of them may have played the uilleann pipes as well. Uncles of John Doherty, they exerted a strong influence on his fiddling. In general they were important contributors to the fiddling tradition of South-west Donegal. They travelled a regular circuit in that region, playing for dances and selling tinware, ranging from household goods to tin fiddles. They also made bagpipes out of bootree (elder tree). Simon Doherty credits them with the invention of the tin fiddle. They possessed a large and varied repertoire of fiddle tunes originating from outside the county but which eventually became integrated with the

indigenous repertoire. They exerted a particularly strong influence on the Teelin fiddlers.

CHARLIE DOHERTY b. 1880 d. 1931 John's eldest brother. He played the fiddle and spent some time in the United States, from whence he brought back the musical version of 'Rakish Paddy' that John plays.

HUGH DOHERTY b. 1894 d. 1942 Fiddler and saddle and harness maker. Though he never travelled as a musician or craftsman, his house near Ballybofey was a gathering place for musicians and craftsmen who did. He was the father of Simon, b. 1916, and Michael Doherty, both of whom play the fiddle. Until recent times, Simon was a practising smith, but he closed down his forge due to ill health. He still makes the occasional tin fiddle for his own pleasure. Michael emigrated to Australia.

SIMON DOHERTY b. 1883 d. 1961 He played the fiddle, and died in a tragic fire near Glenfin. John Doherty and Simon were known for their highly polished duet playing. John associates the air 'The Dying Hussar' with Simon's playing.

MICKEY DOHERTY b. 1891 d. 1967 As renowned a fiddler and story teller as John, he and John were also noted for their synchronised fiddling duets. In his later years Mickey was an important informant for the many collectors who came to the county, among them Seamus Ennis, Peter Kennedy and Alan Lomax.

FANNY DOHERTY b. 1877 d. 1952 The daughter of Michael and Mary Doherty, she was known as a singer and married Edward O'Rourke, a whistle player who came from a family of travelling musicians.

The role that the travelling musicians played in relation to local musical tradition was both conservative and innovative. They were responsible for introducing new fiddling techniques and tunes into the various localities of rural Donegal, and it is quite possible that it was the travelling musicians who popularised the violin when it was first adapted to traditional music. They most certainly introduced the tin fiddle as an economical alternative to the standard violin, thereby increasing the circulation of available instruments in a region where aspiring fiddlers were often hard put to locate an instrument to learn on. The travelling families, who were often looked upon as a separate community by the sedentary farmers, played an important part in preserving regional musical traditions despite successive years of geographical isolation, emigration and cultural suppression. John Doherty perceives his music as a familial legacy that is tied to the cultural continuity of rural Donegal. This attitude impregnates his involvement in the music with an historical awareness. His approach to the music is tempered by the fact that he is a nomadic outsider in a sedentary society; that he is not wholly part of the society whose oral culture he has maintained and preserved. Thus John Doherty possesses an over-view of Donegal folk culture that is unique in its depth. He is the 'stranger' who preserves that which the culture has lost. He sees his own life as part of this mythos and has transformed his knowledge, experience and skills into a highly personalised art form of music and story-telling in order to express this mythos. Whenever he picks up his fiddle or begins a story he is conscious that he is involved in a ritual that the Dohertys have enacted for almost two centuries. This ritual is the sieve through which he sees himself, it is the central act that has directed the course of his life. When he performs the effect is magical. Doherty possesses entire cycles of stories and tunes that he is able to weave together into a tapestry of Donegal life as it existed a century ago. The tunes can range from the quick reel to the stately lament and the stories from the dry humour of the rural anecdote to eerie encounters with the supernatural. It is a performance free of any taint of professionalism and artificiality, as it has been developed over the years in the intimate environment of the farmhouse kitchen. John Doherty is possessed by the archetypal role of the eternal visitor — the stranger who possesses a fund of story and music which transforms his hosts' kitchen for a short time into a magical space, and when he departs leaves enjoyment and awareness behind him.

John Doherty at  
his kitchen stove



Simon Doherty plays a wild mountainy style of fiddle, typical of the Finntown and Croagh regions. He is fond of using syncopated bowing, lonesome doublestops and long drawn-out notes in his playing which is distinctly different from the fiddle style of his uncle John, who favours straighter bow rhythms and plays in a more austere, stately style. But like his uncle, Simon possesses a fund of rare Donegal tunes and can take a crystal clear tone out of a fiddle, a skill that seems to have been the hallmark of all the Doherty fiddlers. Simon Doherty was born about 1915 near the town of Ballybofey. His father Hugh, John's older brother, was a saddler and began teaching Simon the fiddle at about the same time that Simon was absorbing the art of tinsmithing from his uncles. As an accomplished fiddler and tinsmith Simon Doherty exhibits a modest pride and a keen interest in what he is able to do with his hands. His uncle John, in his old age now prefers to think of himself solely as a fiddler, but for Simon, fiddling and smithing are extensions of each other and make up the central components of what was once the Doherty life style. It is this deep involvement in creating with his hands that Simon expresses in his conversation that is one of the keys to the mentality of this remarkable family. As a result of being free of some of the more confining aspects of an agrarian life style the Dohertys and the McConnells channelled their ingenuity, inventiveness and energy into a wide variety of activities from music-making to instrument-making as well as the production of standard, every-day household items required by the farming community. They not only supplied the material needs of the farming community, but in bringing music, and inexpensively made instruments, they fulfilled the social and cultural needs of the society as well.

At the end of an intensive seven hour recording session, Simon Doherty put down his fiddle and began to reminisce about the life style of the Dohertys and the McConnells as it existed over sixty years ago, and as far back as one hundred and fifty years.

'... I was just taught a couple of tunes by my father when I was young. From less to more, then, we used to go out to ceilidh and rake, and a bit of sport and fun, we'd play a turn about, and we'd play sets, lancers, highlands and germans. At that time I was only a boy and the fun would start around about Hallows Eve, from then on through Christmas till it was Spring day again. Playing for hobby, that was for way of doing. If it was dark we used to put a candle into a small light we made out of tin, we called lanterns, that was the light we had to take us over the top of the cairn and one place or another.

'My father was an industrious man — he was a saddler and used to make harness. When he'd be making those harness, there'd be people there from all over the county. They'd stay there for hours, drinking a cup of tea, talking of how things were going.

Simon Doherty



6/15

Jimmy Decker

6 October '78





There'd be people coming and going, and in our house and the door would be lying open to one o'clock at night. My uncles were travelling around at the time, the Dohertys and the McConnells. They used to have all classes of musical instruments on them and tools for making tin. They would spend away for a full fortnight before they came back to where their destination was. They might spend a week there at home and the next thing you would find some morning two donkeys and two floats and them loaded and headed away for the mountain again. And when they landed up in different townlands they would enjoy themselves. They'd all gather in when my uncles arrived and have their own conversation — who tells the best story — who could sing the best song — who could play the best reel — or where was the best river for fishing — or what kind of article they would want made. It would be all tinware that they'd be selling at that time. They'd pull out two kits of tools, if it was a nice summer time, and sit out at the gable of the house they were visiting. They could make from needle to anchor, two gallon cans, pints, bias cut dishes and strainers. Sometimes they had fishing rods too — spinners, they could taper these rods, they could make the farls themselves and they could strip them into each other. They made their own fishing flies and all. They could make a perm, a wee bit of wrought iron and a cog like a check and they could spin it and it was as good as any rod and could buy nowadays.

'They would go like that from one townland to another till they had their stuff sold out and when they would land back home they would have a night of jollification for themselves. They were fond of a drop of poteen, and they could make their own stills and worm twisted out of copper, twisted round and round. They could even make a worm out of tin. It was a very curious type of worm, it wasn't made like a round worm at all, it was made like an *M* with a thing up on the end of it called a filler and the arm of the still fitted into it. And they put that there into a barrel of water, and at the bottom of the barrel of water they left a ventilation for the pipe to get out through. The steam would come from the arm of the still through the worm and once it touched the water it turned into the best of first class poteen...

'There was a wild lot of people living that way, on the roads. You would meet people in the morning walking along, what we'd call small pedlars, with a lot of things under their arms stopping from house to house. My people were tinsmiths, they manufactured their own stuff, they could make what suited. Those small peddlars sold stuff over that they bought in the shops... There were the McDonalds — they used to play music in the streets. Lillie McEvoy and Francie Welsh all good fiddlers. They would stand under the gas lamps and Francie Welsh he could make that fiddle fairly talk, he was what we call a piece player — he'd play airs and foreign tunes. The MacDonalDs and Lillie McEvoy, they played traditional. This Lillie McEvoy, her husband used to collect for her. They all used to walk from town to town staying at lodging houses and play that town. It would cost you at that time four pence for your bed till the morning. They would play the town again in the morning and then they was away as hard as they could go...

'My grand-uncles Mickey and Alec McConnell were the first to make tin fiddles. They were at a big dance and the fiddle got broke. They had nothing left but the bow and the peg head and the strings. Well, fiddles were scarce at them times so they didn't know what to do. Well my grand-uncle was sitting looking at the broken fiddle — "Oh," he says, "I'm thinking of some remedy," and he just reached for a sheet of tin and he split the sheet of tin in two. He marked it round and round and cut out the identical same shape as the ordinary fiddle, he raised her [the tin], put the head on her and played time about in the morning. That was the McConnells from Connaught, they delighted in smith work and it was them that was the first to draw a plan of it... To make a tin fiddle she has to be cut just the same as that wooden fiddle there, but the belly and the back have to be raised together. And you put two flanges around the rim to connect the belly and back together. You would use no solder only for the neck. There is a drop of solder that goes on the two sides of the neck to hold it firm, but for the body the less solder you use the better. You might use a wee bit on the inside of the rim before you put on the belly, to keep it in its place till you get it properly seamed, and when it's well seamed it would be a lovely job. The "S" holes you put in is called a chiselled "S" hole with a hole there and a hole there [he points to either side of the bridge]... with the sides bent down and a bar in the middle. Then you would put a bass rod in under the third string to give her a lovely soft tone. But the back and front have to be plumb level together, and would have to hammer it out the back the same as the belly — the verse on her has to be one depth all around... and then you would carve your own head and finger-board — ash for the head and a bit of sycamore for the finger-board — that's for the tone of a tin violin — and a nice piece of glass to smooth it out and leave it level. A bit of sycamore for the bridge is just as good as ebony and ash is the best timber for the pegs, it's not a splitful kind of timber, it's long in the grain... Well the McConnells made Irish pipes and tin whistles as well. They made the Irish pipes out of "bootree" (elder). There are parts of this county around Glencolumbkille there, that's good for growing that type of timber. The inside of it is very soft, they used to hollow that and carve out the chanter and the drones from that tree. To make the bag they would take a sheepskin and soak it. Then they would stretch it out and they would seal it with beeswax to make it airtight. They would make the reeds from bootree too. They grow wee small berries on these trees and they used to dye the wood with them. They would boil the whole lot together and it sucked into the pores of the timber and they would get a lovely black colour on the wood. They were out to make a powerful job of it. They would shine the chanter up with a piece of cloth what they call French polishing and it would shine up as if it was varnish. On account of being smiths they made the keys of the pipes out of brass themselves. Down on the bottom of the chanter there was a little ring carved out of bog oak, it was heavy and kept the chanter well balanced. But once you boiled the wood in those berries they would seal it and the pipes would last hundreds of years...'

Simon Doherty in  
the Reelin Bridge  
bar, 1979



The Dohertys, the McConnells and others like them were not aimless wanderers haphazardly extracting a living from the sedentary farming community. Operating from permanent bases they travelled established, regular circuits playing their music and selling their crafts. For generations they were involved in the creation of craft work and of a music in much demand by the farming communities. It is no accident that they maintained and cultivated the oral culture of rural Donegal. They were the one community in that county that had access to the traditions of all the separated townlands. They alone knew the cultural totality of rural Donegal in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When that totality disintegrated under the impact of modernity the delicate web of interrelationships that existed between the travellers and the farming community fell apart.

The life style was based on an economic and cultural balance arising from the isolation and immobility of the farming population, the inaccessibility of mass-produced hardware, and the deep involvement of these farming communities in their own traditional culture. The relationship of the farming and the travelling communities was rooted in the communal values that structured their social life, economy and etiquette. The advent of modernity radically altered the economics and ethics that governed this relationship. The introduction of better roads, the automobile, mass-produced consumer goods and popular music rendered the life style and economy of the travelling families dysfunctional. In no way is this more evident than in the fact that as the practice of country house dancing fell into disuse, John Doherty was forced to seek his livelihood by playing in the local pubs. It is a tribute to his art that he can replicate the special atmosphere of the kitchen fireside in the different surroundings of the public house. But his skill in doing so should not draw attention away from the fact that in performing in pubs his relationship to his audience was drastically altered from guest to paid entertainer. For John Doherty a certain continuity has been broken. He is a figure in exile, and the public recognition he receives is a poor substitute for his vanished life style. He is one of the last of his family and certainly the last of his type of rural musician. For John Doherty the music he plays is irrevocably separated from the context in which it flourished. When he picks up the fiddle to play it is, among other things, to remind himself of a certain wholeness that once existed and now survives only in his music.

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John Doherty's repertoire reflects the general variety of dance music popular with Donegal fiddlers of his generation, though in his case the repertoire is certainly more extensive and contains more unusual and rarer tunes than most other Donegal fiddlers. His repertoire breaks down into the following categories — reels, single jigs, double jigs, slip jigs, pipe marches, highland schottisches, highland flings, strathspeys, hornpipes, mazurkas, barn dances, airs, laments, programme pieces (tunes or a medley of tunes expressing a certain theme, such as 'The Fox Chase'), 'Victorian' brass band marches and the occasional 'music hall' piece. Through the range of his repertoire one can trace the changing tastes of Irish rural society in relation to dance music.

The repertoire can easily be divided into the older Donegal-based music, and the newer tunes, such as some of the hornpipes and the brass band marches, which reveal the influence of the 'Victorian' classical style with their unusual scales and tricky fingering. In this class of tune there is a prevalence of form over musical content, and most accomplished Donegal players learned them as a challenge to their technical mastery of the instrument, or as a response to the dancers who wanted to dance the new steps associated with the music. Their presence in Doherty's repertoire testifies to the growing influence of external culture in Donegal, and it is only a short step in musical taste from these hornpipes and marches to the modern music which, through the medium of radio and phonograph, eventually supplanted the older dances.

The presence of highlands, strathspeys and pipe marches implies a strong Scottish influence on Doherty's music. Indeed this Scottish element can be found in the playing of most Donegal players, which is the result of very strong and ancient ties with the Scottish Highlands and islands, which was reinforced in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries by the practice of migratory labour, in which many Donegal men would work as agricultural workers in Scotland especially for the potato harvest. The presence of the Highland pipes in Donegal as a folk tradition separate from the piping school found in the military bands of the British army, suggests that at one point Donegal and the Scottish Highlands shared a very similar musical tradition. The origins of the Scottish element in John Doherty's music breaks down into three historical periods. First, there are the tunes derived from the piping tradition of the Doherty family and from the piping of his cousins the Gallagher brothers. These piping tunes are some of the oldest pieces in Doherty's repertoire, dating back to the sixteenth century, the most archaic being the funeral laments that he claims were 'played to accompany the dead on their last journey'. In the second category, which consists mainly of highlands, are tunes composed in Donegal in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but utilising Scottish musical form. The highland, which has a two hundred year history in Donegal, was probably the most popular dance at the big nights. This is particularly true of South-west Donegal where most of the Irish highlands that John plays originate. Besides composing new highlands it was a common practice of the fiddlers of this region to 'break down' Irish reels into the highland rhythm, thereby coming up with a new tune. The third category consists of tunes derived from those of the later composers of Scottish fiddler music, particularly Scott Skinner, whose recorded music had a strong influence on the Donegal fiddlers of John's generation. But unlike his Scottish disciples the Donegal players of Skinner's music tended to ignore the classicist element and concentrate on the tunes as dance music. John Doherty's rendering of Skinner's music is much more alive, and a good deal less pretentious, than most Scottish players. As with most Donegal fiddlers, Doherty plays many Irish reels not found in other counties. In addition he possesses many unusual variants of standard tunes popular in the rest of Ireland. The presence of such a large number of unusual reels in his repertoire is an indication of the antiquity of the family's tradition, as well as the geographical isolation of Donegal. There are a number of three part reels where the third part is a variant of the first part, but played an octave higher. This tune structure seems indigenous to Donegal where the practice for two or more fiddlers to play in octaves was very common.

Despite old age and fragile health John Doherty is still a virtuoso fiddler. His playing owes much of its character to the aesthetics of the Highland pipes, an instrument that was as popular in his family as the fiddle. With his left hand he will tend to replicate the melodic ornaments of the Highland pipes with his fingering. With his bow hand he will use short quick bow strokes to evoke the staccato rhythms of the

chanter. It is the strong influence of the Highland pipes that roots his fiddle style into an ancient tradition that is markedly different from contemporary styles of Irish fiddling. For a fiddler of John Doherty's technical skill, playing in this austere style demands a great deal of self discipline. Though he prefers to play in this style he is also capable of almost any technical feat, or trick on the fiddle. He can play fluently in second and third positions, a rare accomplishment for a traditional player, and in special programme pieces, like the 'Hunt of the Hound and the Hare' he can reproduce on the fiddle uncanny echoes of baying hounds, hunting horns and galloping horses that seem to come at a distance towards the listener. Yet he limits this type of playing to particular pieces of music that require it and for the majority of his tunes he rarely employs any tricks or over-elaborate ornamentation. Donegal fiddlers in general prefer to ornament tunes with the bow and leave the left hand to concentrate on the melody with a bare minimum of decorations. John Doherty follows this style and his playing reveals an aesthetic concern for the purity of melody. Doherty depends on the powerful tone that he can draw out of the fiddle rather than ornamentation to create dramatic effects, and to disclose emotional nuances in a tune. The way in which he describes his father's playing is applicable to his own — 'He could strike great power into it.' He may have cultivated his powerful tone in response to playing out doors at fairs and in crowded kitchens, noisy with the clatter of dancing feet. At the same time there is an aesthetic element involved in his use of tone, for he constantly uses his skill to reveal and deepen the beauty of the melodic structure of a tune. When he plays, the tunes sound old. You feel as if you are hearing the tune as it must have sounded when first composed, as it was played centuries ago without adulterations and modifications. John will often mention that fact to the sympathetic listener himself. The effect of his style of playing is to surround a tune with a lonely remote quality that is distinct from the rollicking, earthy playing of most other Donegal fiddlers; he forces the listener to contemplate the mystery that lies hidden in each tune. He will often look curiously at his fiddle and pat it, informing the listener that there are more things in this instrument than man can know. He regards the fiddle as a transcendent object and is fond of telling humorous stories of its magical powers.

'There come a circus to Ardara one time when I was only a wee lad. They had this trick fiddler with them, a fellow who looked like he had no jaw at all. Well he played a few tunes and then he put the fiddle on his lap with the bow lying across it. And he says to the fiddle, "Now I am requesting you to sing for these kind people." Well would you believe, but the fiddle started to sing, and he laid no hand on her at all. Well, I didn't know whether to run or stay. Most of the people of the tent were running for the exit, and one man when he reached the entrance of the tent turned around and shouted, "You know what you are, you're the devil." All the folk agreed that must have been the devil.'

John Doherty





Perhaps his approach to fiddling is influenced by the origin of most of his music in what he sees as a remote age. Certainly with such a strong family history of playing going back over several generations there was probably an imperative to play the music in its purest form. When he plays John Doherty is not only playing his own music but his father's, grandfather's and great-grandfather's music too. His playing style is probably further influenced by the fact that some of his most beautiful pieces of music, which he calls 'unearthly', originate in encounters with the other world. In our own culture the creative process is a psychological fact occurring within the confines of the self. In the world in which John Doherty was reared the creative process is mythicised; it is not individualistic. It is essentially a happening external to the self, the result of interactions between the self and the natural or supernatural world. In John's way of thinking music is an important bridge documenting man's encounters with these realities.

'...The old musicians in them days, they would take music from anything. They would take music from the sound of the sea, or they would go alongside of the river at the time of the flood and they would take music from that. They would take music from the chase of the hound and the hare. They would take music from several things... It must be a long long time ago; Fiddler Doyle it appears was a good fiddle player and a good man managing a horse. He used to go on horseback to play at a party — maybe he was asked to go fifteen or twenty miles away to play at a party. He would bring his fiddle and case with him, and he would step on the mare, and he would ride on to the house where the entertainment was taking place. Once he was coming home at a very late hour, he was coming past a crossroads that was there at the time, where there was a vision appearing. You know a horse is very sensitive to a thing, before you and I could see it. Just as Doyle and the mare were coming forward to this crossroads there was this vision standing at the crossroads. The mare halted and Doyle knew what was wrong — he knew the mare saw whatever was in it. He got down off the mare's back, then he got up on her back again and it was Sally they called the mare. "Come on Sally," says he now, "and I'll guide ye all the way through," and he patted her on the side of the neck. The mare walked nice and easy up till she come to the cross-roads and just with that the mare bolted, and Doyle was a good enough horse rider and he stayed on her back anyway, but he was going at an awful rate and the vision kept alongside of the mare, maybe the creature was going sixty miles an hour. She kept at the rate on and on till she came to the gable of that house where they lived. Doyle got down off the mare's back, he stabled the horse and walked into the house. He took something to eat and later he went to bed. And when he was in bed he got the impression by listening to the animal's hooves on the road during this terrible race, of a reel, and he took down his fiddle and played this reel over and he put the mare's name on it. He called it 'The Black Mare of Fanad'. I'd hear the old people telling it a thousand times.'

River, South-west  
Donegal



March 1977

— 4 —

The hospital was a sleepy place devoid of the functional decor of the modern clinic. It seemed a remnant of the last century — more of a place to keep sick people out of the way than a place for healing. We were apprehensive and tense. My companion and I had come to visit John Doherty who, we heard, was extremely ill. The unavoidable atmosphere of a dormant nineteenth century hospital that surrounded us only increased our anxiety. John Doherty was of an age and lifestyle where he was unlikely to survive either illness or the institutional routines of hospital life. We entered a ward in which a dozen men lay on their beds, or sat dressed in street clothes, looking bored, as if they had been dumped on top of those beds and left there for no reason except for the fact they were all in their seventies or eighties.

We found John Doherty sitting by his bed occupied with his pipe and tobacco. It was the first time I had met him without his tweed cap on. He has a large, dignified, fine-boned head. He greeted us with smiling eyes that were the palest of blue, the colour of the sky off the Donegal coast on a warm hazy day, and made us welcome in his usual cordial manner as if he was inviting us to sit in his private parlour. He possesses a gentle courtly way and is very skillful in transforming unlikely locations such as pubs — and in this case a hospital ward — into private intimate spheres. In talking to him, you cannot help but form the impression that you are in conversation with an educated, modest gentleman of an earlier age.

As we sat down I slipped him a small bottle of whiskey to help him survive the dull routine of hospital life. Our conversation, of course, soon turned to music. I mentioned to John that I had brought with me a tape of a Highland piper to cheer him up. That set him off on a general talk about the music of the Highland pipers of which he is extremely fond and which has had an extensive influence on his own fiddling. Along with the fiddle his father and grandfather had been masters of the Highland pipes, which was a popular instrument in Donegal when John was a boy. Gradually as John's amusing talk drew us into a closer circle the atmosphere of the hospital receded, and in a soft low voice he began lilting pipe tunes, reels, strathspeys, and marches, one after another. He injected into his lilting all the ornamentations and nuances of the Highland pipes. We sat mesmerized, knowing full well that we were witnesses to a magnificent performance, possibly the last ever to be given by this great fiddler. Here in front of us was the emblem of the master musician, a man so impregnated with music that he possessed the capacity to make it with the simplest of instruments in the most adverse of situations. His lilting was so masterful that his voice became the pipes sounding away in the distance. After a while he stopped, apologising to us, explaining that his illness had left him short of breath. We had only a recording of pipe music to recompense John, but he was anxious to hear the tape. The piper was good and John withdrew into himself to listen to the music. John's body was before us and gradually became an empty shell — his eyes looked only inward. They were dominated by a distant image: the music of the pipes had carried him away.

Ned Gallagher's  
house

My companion and I exchanged looks. We had become aware of his withdrawal at the one moment, and both of us were frightened and at the same time moved. But as the tape played we gradually became aware of another sound that was intruding into our circle. Its volume threatened to overwhelm the music on the tape. As the piper played, one by one each of the inhabitants of the ward had fallen asleep, and each in his turn had contributed a drone to a cacophony of snores that threatened to engulf us. We could not control our laughter at the overpowering sound: twelve old men snoring away in the late afternoon, an off-key accompaniment to the piper playing on the tape. It broke the spell and John slowly came back from wherever he had been and, smiling, suggested that the pipes had put the old men to sleep. His observation reminded us that one of the functions of music in the old Gaelic culture was the magical induction of sleep. After a while we rose, making our way through the droning bodies. We left John Doherty sitting by his bed calmly smoking his pipe as the harsh angular winter light poured through the hospital windows revealing his fragility in that room full of sleeping old men...

Several months after our visit John Doherty was discharged from hospital in a weak but basically healthy condition. His near encounter with death seemed to have eradicated the last remnants of his former life style. Soon after his release he retired to a small town in Eastern Donegal where he had relations who could look after him. He has ceased playing in pubs as a full-time practice, and kept no fiddle in the house with him for fear of disturbing the neighbours. He was willing to play for the occasional friend who dropped by with a violin, and when he played the old power was still present, yet for a man of his experience he seemed immersed in silence. Good as this regimen may have been for his physical condition, John was only able to abide it for a short period. He soon took to the road again, circulating among the hospitable homes of the many friends he has throughout Donegal. The patterns of a lifetime were hard to change. As he travels, moving among his close friends and admirers, he carries no fiddle with him. It is indicative of the type of life he has led that John Doherty can move from place to place in Donegal, knowing that in each resting-place he chooses a fiddle will inevitably find its way into his hands so that he can fill the house with the sound of his music. It is as if he has a pre-determined appointment with every fiddle he plays.



There is a tale that John is fond of telling that concerns one of his most beautiful pieces of music, a lament he calls 'Paddy Rambles Through the Park'. The tale serves him well as a metaphor for a life devoted to the search for musical experience.

'Paddy was a great musical man and a great singer. And he would stroll away at night and go away to rake — to places where they would be dance parties. Well, he was strolling home at a very late hour one night and he was coming past that big demesne about three o'clock at night. But there inside the fence he heard this lovely singer, and he stopped for a moment to listen to the song. "Well," he says, "that's a lovely singer that's singing just now," and what was the singer only a banshee. So Paddy wanted to get in near to it so he could hear the song. But at that time they wouldn't take stones away from the park — any stones they would get they put them in a pile. They used to call them a cairn. Well anyhow, he heard the singer at the first cairn. "Well," says he, "I'll see if I can get in touch with that singer," says he. He went into the first cairn and the singer was at the second cairn and when he was there the singer was at the third cairn. That is how he was kept rambling through the park till it was clear daylight. But he made good and sure he would have the air of the song with him in great style indeed — and you would know by its playing it is something unearthly.'





# JOHN DOHERTY

## Double Jigs and Slip Jigs

### Darby Gallagher's Jig

J.D.



Musical notation for Darby Gallagher's Jig, consisting of three staves of music in treble clef, key of D major, and 6/8 time signature. The piece features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes with various rhythmic patterns and repeat signs.

### King of the Pipers (the Kilrane Jig)

J.D.



Musical notation for King of the Pipers (the Kilrane Jig), consisting of seven staves of music in treble clef, key of D major, and 6/8 time signature. The piece features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes with various rhythmic patterns and repeat signs.



Gusty's Frolics (Slip Jig)

J.D.

Musical score for "Gusty's Frolics (Slip Jig)" in G major (one sharp) and 3/8 time. The score consists of seven staves of music. The first four staves feature a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The fifth and sixth staves show a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes. The seventh staff concludes with a double bar line and first and second endings.

Kiss the Maid Behind the Byre

J.D.

Musical score for "Kiss the Maid Behind the Byre" in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The second and fourth staves conclude with first and second endings. The third staff features a melodic line with eighth notes.

# The Knights of St. Patrick

J.D.

A musical score for the song 'The Knights of St. Patrick' by J.D. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 6/8 time signature. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a 6/8 time signature. The music is written in a single melodic line. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff continues the melody and includes a repeat sign. The fifth staff continues the melody and includes a first ending (marked '1') and a second ending (marked '2'). The piece concludes with a double bar line and the initials 'J.D.' in the bottom right corner.



John Doherty

Paidin O'Rafferty

J.D.

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Paidin O'Rafferty' by J.D. The score is written in a single system with ten staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 6/8. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and accidentals. There are several first and second endings marked with '1' and '2' above the notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

# Policeman's Holiday

J.D.

Musical notation for 'Policeman's Holiday' in G major, 6/8 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff contains the first six measures. The second staff contains measures 7-12, with a repeat sign at the beginning and an asterisk over the eighth measure. The third staff contains measures 13-18, with asterisks over the 13th and 15th measures. The fourth staff contains measures 19-24, with asterisks over the 19th and 23rd measures. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Notes marked \* are played C4 the first time around, C# later

# Untitled Slip Jig (Langstrom's Pony?)

J.D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Slip Jig (Langstrom's Pony?)' in G major, 9/8 time. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains the first six measures, with a 12/8 time signature change in the second measure. The second staff contains measures 7-12. The third staff contains measures 13-18. The piece ends with a double bar line.

The last three notes of bars 2 & 4 are redundant. The player may have had bars 8 & 12 in mind.

# Untitled Slip Jig

J.D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Slip Jig' in G major, 9/8 time. The piece consists of two staves of music. The first staff contains the first six measures. The second staff contains measures 7-12. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Untitled Double Jig

J.D.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Untitled Double Jig" by J.D. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (D major) and a 6/8 time signature. It consists of eight staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and a double bar line. The second staff ends with a repeat sign and a double bar line. The third and fourth staves contain melodic lines with various note values and rests. The fifth and sixth staves continue the melody with some grace notes. The seventh staff features a series of eighth-note patterns. The eighth staff concludes the piece with two first and second endings, indicated by the numbers 1 and 2 above the notes.





# Reels

## The Black Mare of Fanad

J.D.

The musical score for 'The Black Mare of Fanad' is written for a single melodic line in treble clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The piece consists of ten staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The melody is characterized by a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet patterns. The second staff concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots. The third staff continues the melody with similar rhythmic patterns. The fourth staff also concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots. The fifth and sixth staves feature a more rhythmic, eighth-note pattern. The seventh and eighth staves return to a melody similar to the first staff, with a small 'v' marking above a note in the eighth staff. The ninth and tenth staves continue the rhythmic eighth-note pattern. The piece ends with a final double bar line.



# The Black Haired Lass

J.D.



Seán Mc Donn's Home Silverhill 78

o'Jolan

The Cameronian Reel

J.D.

Musical score for 'The Cameronian Reel' in 4/4 time, featuring a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a double bar line and repeat sign. The second staff includes first and second endings. The third staff contains a key signature change to two sharps (D major). The fourth staff concludes with a double bar line and repeat sign.

The Dispute at the Crossroads (Dr. Gilbert)

J.D.

Musical score for 'The Dispute at the Crossroads (Dr. Gilbert)' in 4/4 time, featuring a key signature of two sharps (D major). The score consists of six staves of music. The first five staves are continuous, and the sixth staff includes first and second endings. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat sign.

# Drowsy Maggie

J.D.

The musical score for 'Drowsy Maggie' consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody starts with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The second staff continues the melody with quarter notes D5, E5, and F#5, then quarter notes G5, A5, and B5. The third staff features a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, C5, B5, A5, G5, F#5, E5, D5, C5. The fourth staff continues with eighth notes: B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2. The fifth and sixth staves continue the eighth-note pattern, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

# The Five Mile Chase

J.D.

The musical score for 'The Five Mile Chase' consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody starts with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The second staff continues with quarter notes D5, E5, and F#5, then quarter notes G5, A5, and B5. The third staff features a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, C5, B5, A5, G5, F#5, E5, D5, C5. The fourth staff continues with eighth notes: B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The Hare in the Corn

J.D.

Musical score for 'The Hare in the Corn' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff contains the first two measures of the melody. The second staff contains the next two measures, including a first ending bracketed with a '1' and a second ending bracketed with a '2'. The third staff contains the next two measures. The fourth staff contains the final two measures, also including a first ending bracketed with a '1' and a second ending bracketed with a '2'. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Miss Johnson's Reel

J.D.

Musical score for 'Miss Johnson's Reel' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of six staves. The first staff contains the first two measures of the melody. The second staff contains the next two measures. The third staff contains the next two measures. The fourth staff contains the next two measures. The fifth staff contains the next two measures. The sixth staff contains the final two measures, concluding with a double bar line.

The Monaghan Switch (The Ladies of Tullybardee)

J.D.

The musical score is written on six staves. The first five staves are in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). A double bar line with a repeat sign is placed above the first measure. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. The sixth staff concludes with a double bar line, a repeat sign, and a final key signature change to D major (two sharps). There are first and second endings marked with '1' and '2' above the notes in the final measure.

Miss Patterson's Slipper

J.D.

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in treble clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The piece consists of ten staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The second staff continues the melody. The third and fourth staves feature a series of eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents. The fifth staff includes a first ending bracket with two endings, marked '1' and '2'. The sixth and seventh staves continue with eighth-note patterns, including slurs and accents. The eighth and ninth staves feature a series of eighth-note patterns with slurs. The tenth staff concludes the piece with a final cadence.

*the first section is repeated spiccato*

# The Nine Pint Coggie

J.D.

The musical score for 'The Nine Pint Coggie' consists of four staves of music. The first two staves are in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature (C). The first staff begins with a half rest followed by a quarter note G4, then a series of eighth notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. The second staff continues with eighth notes: D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2. The third and fourth staves continue the melody with eighth notes and quarter notes, ending with a double bar line.

# Rakish Paddy

J.D.

The musical score for 'Rakish Paddy' consists of eight staves of music. The first staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It begins with a half rest followed by a quarter note G4, then eighth notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the first measure. The second staff continues with eighth notes: D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2. The third staff continues with eighth notes: D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2. The fourth staff continues with eighth notes: D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2. The fifth staff continues with eighth notes: D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2. The sixth staff continues with eighth notes: D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2. The seventh staff continues with eighth notes: D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2. The eighth staff continues with eighth notes: D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2. The score ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final measure.

d.8



O'Garra's, Kildare.





# Stormy Weather

J.D.

Musical score for 'Stormy Weather' in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The score consists of eight staves of music. The melody is characterized by a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet patterns. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

# Untitled Reel

J.D.

Musical score for 'Untitled Reel' in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The melody is primarily composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet patterns. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Untitled Reel

J.D.

Musical score for 'Untitled Reel' by J.D. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of five staves of music. The first staff includes first and second endings, indicated by '1' and '2' above the notes. The piece concludes with a final whole note chord.

Untitled Reel

J.D.

Musical score for 'Untitled Reel' by J.D. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of four staves of music. The piece concludes with a final whole note chord.

Untitled Reel

J.D.

Untitled Reel

J.D.

Untitled Reel (Paddy Ryan's Dreams?)

J.D.



# Highlands, Strathspeys and Hornpipes

## The Cat that Kittled in Jamie's Wig

J.D.

Musical score for 'The Cat that Kittled in Jamie's Wig' in G major, common time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff is the melody, starting with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The second staff is a second ending with two alternatives. The third and fourth staves are accompaniment, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

## The Ewe with the Crooked Horn

J.D.

Musical score for 'The Ewe with the Crooked Horn' in G major, common time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff is the melody, starting with a fermata over the first measure. The second staff is a second ending. The third and fourth staves are accompaniment, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 'd. s.' marking.

The Ladies of Gormond (Highland)

J.D.

Musical score for 'The Ladies of Gormond (Highland)'. It consists of three staves of music in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a first ending bracketed over the final two measures and a second ending bracketed over the next two measures. The second and third staves provide accompaniment with chords and rhythmic patterns.

The Tartan on the Heather (Strathspey)

J.D.

Musical score for 'The Tartan on the Heather (Strathspey)'. It consists of three staves of music in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody is characterized by a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a first ending bracketed over the final two measures. The second and third staves provide accompaniment with chords and rhythmic patterns.

The Teelin Highland

J.D.

Musical score for 'The Teelin Highland'. It consists of two staves of music in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody is primarily composed of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff provides accompaniment with chords and rhythmic patterns.

# The Twenty One Highland

J.D.

Musical notation for 'The Twenty One Highland' in treble clef, C major, common time. The piece consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a melodic line featuring a slur and an accent (^) over the first four notes. The second staff starts with a '2' and a slur, indicating a second ending. The third staff continues the melodic development with various rhythmic patterns and slurs.

# Untitled Highland

J.D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Highland' in treble clef, D major, common time. The piece consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a melodic line. The second staff continues the melody with slurs and accents. The third and fourth staves feature more complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs and slurs.

*This tune is repeated an octave lower the second last time around.*

# Untitled Highland

J.D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Highland' in treble clef, D major, common time. The piece consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a melodic line. The second and third staves continue the melody with various rhythmic patterns and slurs.



Untitled Highland

J.D.

A musical score for 'Untitled Highland' in C major, 2/4 time. It consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written in eighth and sixteenth notes. The second and third staves continue the melody with similar rhythmic patterns. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note. A small 'd. 58' is written at the bottom right of the fourth staff.

Untitled Highland

J.D.

A musical score for 'Untitled Highland' in D major, 2/4 time. It consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody is written in eighth and sixteenth notes. The second and third staves continue the melody with similar rhythmic patterns. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note.

*This tune is played an octave lower the last time around*

Untitled Highland

J.D.

Musical score for 'Untitled Highland' in G major, common time. The score consists of six staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). It features a melody starting with a fermata over the first note. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff introduces a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The fourth staff continues the accompaniment and includes a first ending bracket. The fifth staff includes a second ending bracket. The sixth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and a 'd.s.' (da Capo) instruction.

The Atlantic Roar (Hornpipe)

J.D.

Musical score for 'The Atlantic Roar (Hornpipe)' in G major, common time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). It features a melody with a fermata over the first note and a bass line with chords. The second staff continues the melody and bass line. The third and fourth staves continue the melody and bass line, ending with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note.



# Marches

## Bundle and Go

J.D.

Musical score for 'Bundle and Go' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. It contains a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff includes first and second endings, indicated by '1' and '2' above the notes. The third staff features a piano (p.) dynamic marking. The fourth staff also includes first and second endings.

## Gallagher's March

J.D.

Musical score for 'Gallagher's March' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of five staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. It contains a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff includes a piano (p.) dynamic marking. The third staff features a piano (p.) dynamic marking. The fourth staff includes a piano (p.) dynamic marking. The fifth staff includes first and second endings, indicated by '1' and '2' above the notes, and ends with a double bar line and a 4/8 time signature.

Grania's Welcome Home (March, Jig and Reel)

J.D.

2nd time omit

1 2

1 2

1 2

1 2

1 2

1 2

1 2

1 2

1 2

1 2

March of the Meeatoiteen Bull

J.D.

Musical score for 'March of the Meeatoiteen Bull' in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The score consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet markings. The second staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The third staff begins with a repeat sign and a fermata over the first note. The fourth staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The fifth staff begins with a repeat sign. The sixth staff ends with a double bar line, repeat dots, and a 'd.s.' (da Capo) marking.

The Paps of Glencoe

J.D.

Musical score for 'The Paps of Glencoe' in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The music features eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff includes first and second endings, marked with '1' and '2' above the notes. The third staff begins with a repeat sign and a fermata over the first note. The fourth staff includes first and second endings, marked with '1' and '2' above the notes.

Untitled March

J.D.

The first musical score consists of four staves of music. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The melody is written on a single treble clef staff. The first staff contains the first four measures. The second staff contains the next four measures, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots. The third staff contains the next four measures. The fourth staff contains the final four measures, also ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled March

J.D.

The second musical score consists of six staves of music. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The melody is written on a single treble clef staff. The first staff contains the first four measures. The second staff contains the next four measures, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots. The third staff contains the next four measures. The fourth staff contains the next four measures. The fifth staff contains the next four measures. The sixth staff contains the final four measures, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

# You're Welcome Home Royal Charlie

J.D.

The musical score is written on six staves in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (D major) and a common time signature (C). The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a repeat sign after the first measure. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a first ending bracket over measures 5-6 and a second ending bracket over measures 7-8. The third staff shows a continuation of the melody with various note values and rests. The fourth staff includes a first ending bracket over measures 9-10 and a second ending bracket over measures 11-12. The fifth staff features a more rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes and rests. The sixth staff concludes the piece with a first ending bracket over measures 13-14 and a second ending bracket over measures 15-16.







## Airs, Barndances, Mazurkas and Set Pieces

### The Ghost of Bunglass

J.D.

Musical score for 'The Ghost of Bunglass' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of three systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second system has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The third system has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score includes first and second endings, and a 'd.c.' (da capo) instruction.

### Untitled Barndance

J.D.

Musical score for 'Untitled Barndance' in G major, common time (C). The score consists of five systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second system has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The third system has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The fourth system has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The fifth system has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score includes a 'd.c.' (da capo) instruction.

Francie Welsh's Barndance

J.D.

Musical score for Francie Welsh's Barndance, composed by J.D. The piece is in 6/8 time and G major. It consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and a double bar line. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff features a first ending bracket over the final two measures. The fourth staff starts with a second ending bracket over the first two measures. The fifth staff continues the melody. The sixth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and the marking 'd.c.' (Da Capo).

Untitled Barndance

J.D.

Musical score for Untitled Barndance, composed by J.D. The piece is in common time (C) and G major. It consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and a double bar line, followed by a first ending bracket over the final two measures. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and the marking 'd. %' (Da Capo). The fifth staff is labeled 'last:' and continues the melody. The sixth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line.

Kitty in the Lane (Barndance)

J.D.

1 2

$d = d.$

1 2

1 2

1 2

1 2

1 2

1 2

1 2

$d. \%$

Mazurka

J.D.

*d.c.*



The Hunt of the Hound and the Hare

J.D.

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of ten staves of music. The first three staves contain the main melody with first and second endings. The fourth staff features a bass line with a sequence of chords marked with a double bar line and a percentage sign (%). The fifth staff has a melodic line with a series of dotted notes and an 'accel.....' marking. The sixth staff continues the melodic line with some rests and a final flourish. The seventh staff shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes. The eighth staff continues this complex pattern. The ninth and tenth staves provide a concluding melodic line.

# Lord Mayo

J.D.

*slow*

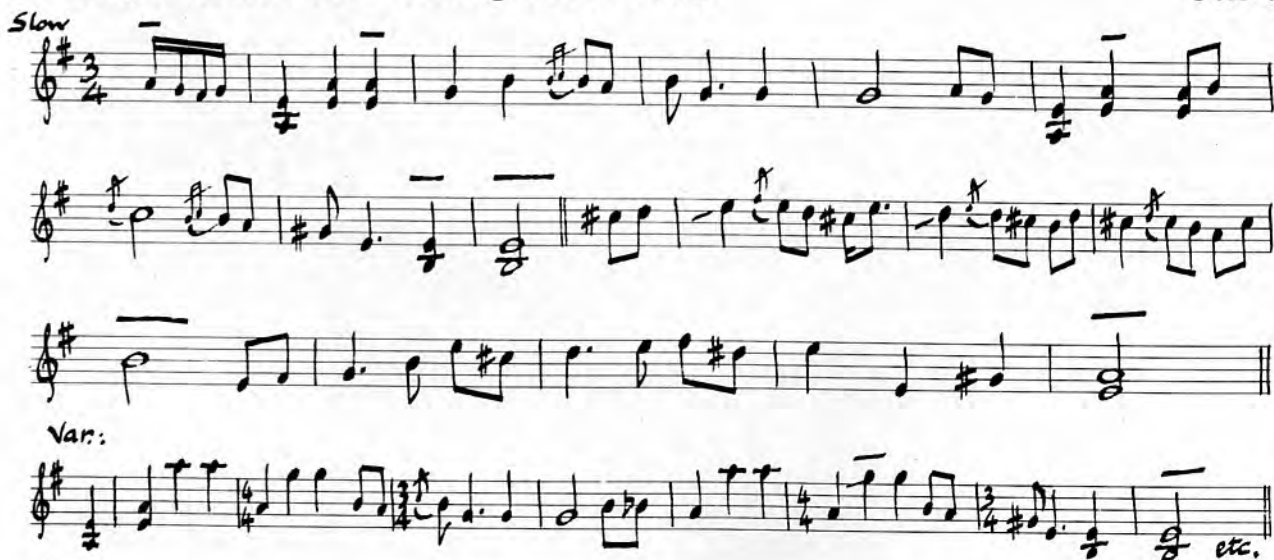


The musical score for 'Lord Mayo' is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The melody is characterized by a slow, flowing line with many slurs and ties. The second and third staves continue the melody with similar phrasing. The fourth and fifth staves feature more complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs. The sixth staff concludes the piece with a final cadence.

# Paddy's Rambles Through the Park

S.D.

*Slow*



The musical score for 'Paddy's Rambles Through the Park' is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The melody is characterized by a slow, flowing line with many slurs and ties. The second and third staves continue the melody with similar phrasing. The fourth staff features a variation of the melody, indicated by the word 'Var.' above it, and ends with 'etc.'.







# SIMON DOHERTY

## Double Jigs and Slip Jigs

### Follow Me Down To Limerick

S.D.

Musical score for 'Follow Me Down To Limerick' in 9/8 time. The score consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a first ending bracket labeled '1' and a second ending bracket labeled '2'. The third staff continues the melody with various rhythmic patterns. The fourth staff continues the melody, including a repeat sign. The fifth staff concludes the piece with a first ending bracket labeled '1' and a second ending bracket labeled '2'.

### The Heart of Me Kitty

S.D.

Musical score for 'The Heart of Me Kitty' in 6/8 time. The score consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a first ending bracket labeled '1' and a second ending bracket labeled '2'. The third staff concludes the piece with a first ending bracket labeled '1' and a second ending bracket labeled '2'.

### The Knights of St. Patrick

S.D.

Musical notation for 'The Knights of St. Patrick'. It consists of three staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a repeat sign with a first ending bracket. The third staff concludes the piece with a final cadence and a repeat sign.

### Untitled Jig

S.D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Jig'. It consists of three staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a repeat sign with a first ending bracket. The third staff concludes the piece with a final cadence and a repeat sign.

### Untitled Jig

S.D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Jig'. It consists of three staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a repeat sign with a first ending bracket. The third staff concludes the piece with a final cadence and a repeat sign.

Untitled Jig

S.D.

The musical score is written on seven staves in a single system. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and repeat signs. A double bar line with repeat dots appears in the second, third, and sixth measures. A fermata is placed over a note in the sixth measure. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots in the seventh measure.

*d. f.*





# Reels

## The Harvest Moon

S.D.

Musical score for 'The Harvest Moon' in C major, 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves. The first two staves are the main melody, and the last two are a bass line. The melody features a series of eighth notes and quarter notes, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C).

## The Ivy Leaf

S.D.

Musical score for 'The Ivy Leaf' in D major, 4/4 time. The score consists of three staves. The first staff is the main melody, and the last two are a bass line. The melody features a series of eighth notes and quarter notes, with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature (C). There are first and second endings marked with '1' and '2' above the notes.

Miss Percy's Reel

S.D.



Musical notation for Miss Percy's Reel, consisting of three staves of music in G major and 2/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet markings. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The Last House of Connaght

S.D.



Musical notation for The Last House of Connaght, consisting of four staves of music in G major and 2/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The music is characterized by a steady eighth-note rhythm. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled Reel

S.D.



Musical notation for Untitled Reel, consisting of four staves of music in G major and 2/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The Temple House Reel

S.D.

Musical notation for 'The Temple House Reel' in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The piece consists of three staves. The first staff is the melody, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The second and third staves are accompaniment, starting with a bass clef and a key signature of two sharps. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet markings and a final double bar line with repeat dots.

Untitled Reel

S.D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Reel' in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The piece consists of four staves. The first staff is the melody, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The second and third staves are accompaniment, starting with a bass clef and a key signature of two sharps. The fourth staff continues the accompaniment. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet markings and a final double bar line with repeat dots.



Untitled Reel

S.D.

Musical score for 'Untitled Reel' in treble clef, 4/4 time. The score consists of eight staves of music. It begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The first staff has a first ending bracket labeled '1' over the final two measures. The second staff has a second ending bracket labeled '2' over the first two measures, followed by a double bar line and a repeat sign. The third staff contains a first ending bracket labeled '1' over the final two measures. The fourth staff continues the melody. The fifth staff has a first ending bracket labeled '1' over the final two measures. The sixth staff has a first ending bracket labeled '1' over the final two measures, with the text '2nd time to  $\Phi$ ' written below it. The seventh staff has a first ending bracket labeled '1' over the final two measures, with the text 'D.S.' written below it. The eighth staff ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign, with the text 'D.S. al  $\odot$ ' written below it.

The Wild Irishman

S.D.

Musical score for 'The Wild Irishman' in treble clef, 4/4 time. The score consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a double bar line with a repeat sign. It features a first ending bracket labeled '1' over the final two measures. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff has a first ending bracket labeled '1' over the final two measures.

# Highlands, Strathspeys, Barndances and Marches

## The Canamine Highland

S.D.

The musical score for 'The Canamine Highland' is presented on six staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and accidentals. The piece concludes with a double bar line on the final staff.

# The Irish Highland

S.D.

Musical score for 'The Irish Highland' in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The score consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff includes a repeat sign with first and second endings. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth and fifth staves show the continuation of the piece. The sixth staff concludes with a double bar line and a final chord.

# Untitled Highland

S.D.

Musical score for 'Untitled Highland' in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody. The third and fourth staves show the continuation of the piece, ending with a double bar line and a final chord.

Untitled Highland

S.D.

Musical score for 'Untitled Highland' in G major, common time. The score consists of three staves. The first two staves are a two-part setting with first and second endings. The third staff is labeled 'variants of bar 1' and shows two alternative phrasings for the first bar of the piece.

Untitled Strathspey

S.D.

Musical score for 'Untitled Strathspey' in G major, common time. The score consists of three staves. The first two staves are a two-part setting with first and second endings. The third staff shows two alternative phrasings for the first bar, labeled '1' and '2'.

Untitled Barndance

S.D.

Musical score for 'Untitled Barndance' in G major, common time. The score consists of four staves. The first two staves are a two-part setting with first and second endings. The last two staves show two alternative phrasings for the first bar, labeled '1' and '2'.

### Untitled Barndance

S.D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Barndance' in 2/4 time, key of D major. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The second staff features a first ending bracket over the final two measures, with a second ending bracket below it. The third staff continues the melody with another first ending bracket over the final two measures and a second ending bracket below it.

### King Billy's March

S.D.

Musical notation for 'King Billy's March' in 2/4 time, key of D major. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The second staff includes a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The third staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat sign.

### Untitled March

S.D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled March' in 2/4 time, key of D major. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). It includes a first ending bracket. The second staff continues with a second ending bracket. The third staff features a first ending bracket. The fourth staff concludes with a second ending bracket and a double bar line with repeat sign.



Simey Deloitte - Ballydoon Sept. '78

O'John G. '78

Cliffs at Port, Co  
Donegal



## KITCHEN MUSIC

— 1 —

The dirt road takes its windy way between the steep sides of the glen, down towards the sea where the deserted village lies. Walking the five miles to the village along this road forces you to appreciate the isolation of the people who lived at the road's end, an isolation that compelled them to leave the glen forty years ago for the relatively more accessible villages further down the coast. This road is the back way to the village; its front entrance is its harbour by the sea. It is indicative of the ruggedness and wildness of the inland terrain of South-west Donegal, that for centuries the main point of contact with the outside world for this village and others like it, was via the North Atlantic which surrounds this coastline on three sides. Most of the villages lie on a plateau bordered by dramatic sea cliffs and intersected inland by mountains,







narrow glens and boggy wastelands. As a consequence, most settlement is located on the coastline with its more fertile land and milder climate. The interior of this country is sparsely populated and good roads are a recent innovation. The landscape of the coast is surrealistically beautiful and inevitably intimidating. Viewed from the sea, the coastal villages look like scattered pebbles resting on massive geological forms. Men have lived here for centuries at a subsistence level, in cautious compromise with the physical environment. The cromlechs and portal dolmens which stand against the vacant skyline of the bog were certainly the ancient creations of a people who related to their physical surroundings with an inbred awe.

The major characteristics of the peasant culture that developed here were moulded to the realities of the environment and cannot be comprehended in isolation from it. It was a society that was politically and economically decentralised. The geography of the region and the available technology permitted only small scale economic activity, and thwarted the development of any efficient network of roads or other system of communication that could have fostered economic and political centralisation. What bound the people of South-west Donegal to each other, beyond the sheer necessity of survival in a sometimes brutal environment, were spiritual and cultural values. The identity of the people was based on a strong sense of kinship, religion, the Irish language, and a shared oral history and musical tradition. The art forms of this scattered society which possessed few material resources tended to be individualistic, egalitarian and community orientated. For a culture with a strong collective life, there was great room for individual expression. Story telling, riddling, singing, dancing, poetry, and instrumental dance music were all forms that demanded personal initiative and inventiveness, and at the same time called for the participation of the community. It was this dialectic of personalised art forms and collective involvement, combined with an age-old geographical isolation, that created a rich oral culture and a people who possessed a unique capacity to entertain themselves. They took a great joy out of life and translated this joy into a fertile folk culture. But even these factors could become impotent in the face of sustained economic deprivation, and as a consequence the landscape is littered with empty villages such as the one I was walking towards along the winding road.

The houses of the village are situated to the right of the road, a little above it on the slope of the hill. At a distance a stranger would be hard put to recognise them as dwelling places. They are built out of the same stones that dot the landscape and are so well sited that they seem to grow out of the land. The organic nature of the structures is further emphasised by the lack of roofs, which is the emblematic sign of emigration throughout the west of Ireland. For when the inhabitants of a village leave, the thatch roof is taken down or allowed to rot. One is instantly struck by the closeness of the four houses to each other, situated on one side of the deep burn of the glen, and one wonders why they were not sited further away from each other for the sake of privacy. Yet this proximity of house sites was the foundation of the social and cultural life of the community. This line of houses, surrounded by a patchwork pattern of walled-in fields, has been termed a *clachán*, and was once typical of the farming settlements of the coastal regions of Donegal. The *clachán* consisted of a kinship cluster of farmhouses, where the adjacent land was worked co-operatively in what is known as a *rundale* system, where each household owned small strips of land scattered amongst his neighbours' holdings. Each household would have access to a balanced share of good and bad land, a distribution that would either be decided by casting lots or through yearly rotation of tillage rights. As children married and other households came into being, the land would undergo a further subdivision. In this system of land-

holding, the farmland was divided into in-fields, which were cultivated annually, and out-fields, where crops were rotated, and which were periodically left fallow. Beyond this lay the commonage, usually situated on mountain slopes where cattle and sheep were grazed. Though this system of scattered landholdings was agriculturally inefficient, and made even subsistence farming a difficult task, it was the economic basis for the communal social life that once existed here. Within this system, where no man held all his land in one place, it was convenient to site houses in a central cluster. In the nineteenth century, when reforming landlords attempted to break up the rundale system in order to promote more efficient land usage, they encountered the strongest resistance to change from the farmers over the scattering of the clacháns, which was to accompany the centralisation of land holdings. The farming community feared the radical alteration of their social life that the proposed separation of dwelling sites would engender.

The inhabitants of this village must have experienced the communal identity of the clachán deeply, for when they left, they all left together. No-one stayed behind to go it alone. I was told that the musical life here was extremely active. The village boasted several singers, and the people of Teelin, a fishing village down the coast, who were noted for their fiddling, were in the habit of taking their boats around Glenhead to the village for nights of dancing, fiddling, and poteen drinking. Here they were far from the surveillance of the gaugers and the strictures of puritanical priests. Today, standing in the roofless central rooms surrounded by thick stone walls, bleached to a bone-like colour by the salt air and wind, the houses seem more like monastic cells than the sites of all-night winter dancing. Yet it was this long rectangular kitchen room that was the centre of musical and social activity.

The deserted  
village of Port, Co  
Donegal





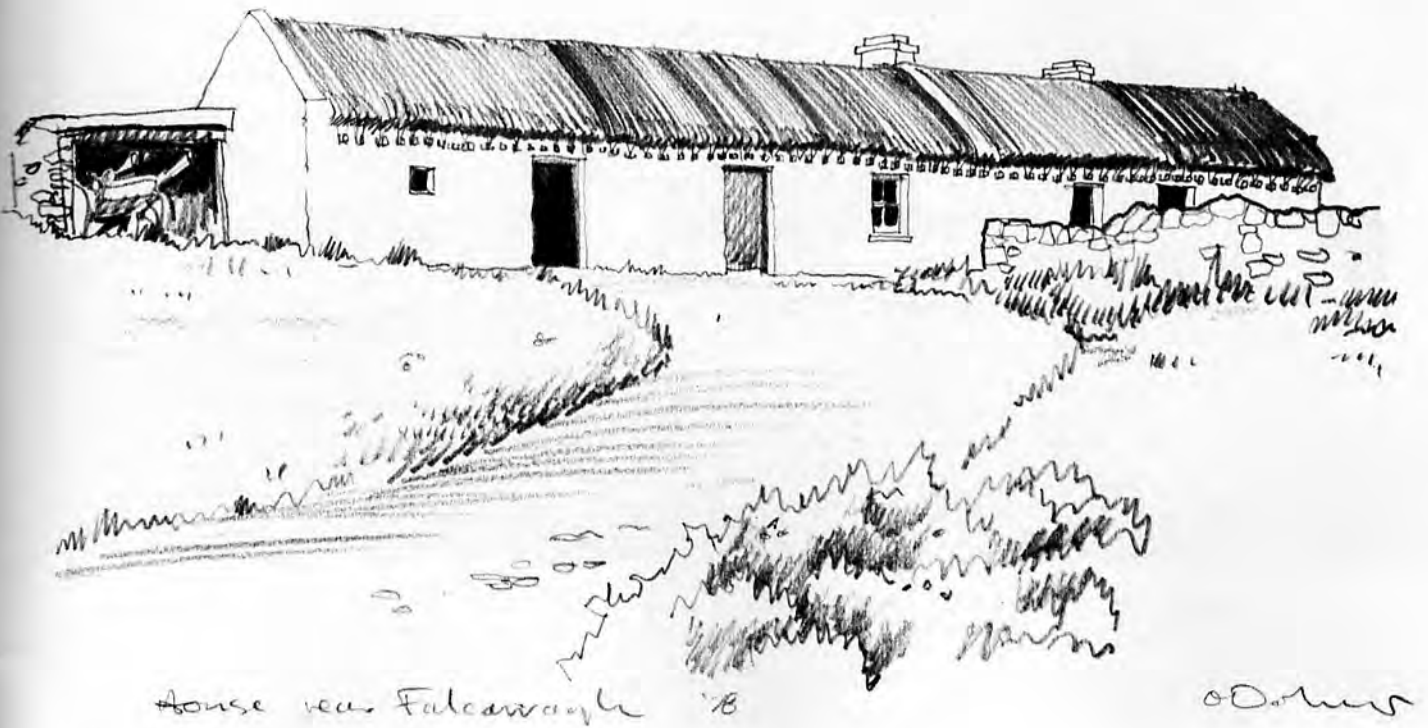
The houses in this village are built on the ancient longhouse or byre house model common to most of Ulster and Western Scotland. They are built with stone — a mixture of large boulders and stone rubble. The hearth and chimney are located at the gable end of the house and a bed alcove projects outward from the back kitchen wall. They were once thatched, and there are pointed stone projections along the walls to which the ropes that kept the thatch down were tied. They were all built on a slight slope and the floors are flagstone, now littered with broken pieces of old crockery and coloured bottles. They are divided into two or three rooms, the largest being the kitchen. The kitchen of the Irish farmhouse was not only the central room of the house in a physical sense, but was also the spiritual centre of the rural culture. It was here that the family and neighbours would gather in to céilidh and rake. This could range from conversation to story-telling, singing, fiddling and dancing. It was a multi-functional space, well-designed to accommodate a variety of work- and play-related activities: the same room that was used for butter-churning, net-mending and spinning, would also have served for all-night dances. As a physical space, the kitchen epitomises the intimate connection between work and play that distinguishes the mentality and value system of this society from our own, where labour and recreation are conceived as mutually exclusive activities. There is no hallway at the entrance of Donegal farmhouses; as you walk into the house, you step into the midst of family life



in the kitchen where, at one end of the room a fire in an open hearth or a cast-iron stove is continuously burning. On a dry day the door will not be shut behind you, but kept open — here there is no strict separation between the natural and man-made environment. Another indication of the communal social life is the placement of all the kitchen furniture alongside the walls of the room. No piece of furniture occupies a permanent central location, not even the table. This practice, which probably originated centuries ago when the fire was located in the centre of the longhouse, facilitated the creation of a central open space that allowed for large social gatherings, and activities such as dancing.

At the end of the nineteenth century, which was the period in which most of the fiddlers we met were born, South-west Donegal was a region of severe poverty. It was composed of scattered farming communities of small holdings devoted to subsistence farming. The average farm was less than ten acres, and many were as small as one acre. The growing of oats, potatoes and the raising of small quantities of livestock and poultry were the main agricultural activities. The weaving of tweed, and sometimes fishing, were the only activities pursued locally that brought in any hard cash. It was virtually a moneyless society, dependent on a good crop of potatoes, the presence of offshore herring, and the demand for migratory labour in Scotland for its economic continuity.

Falcarragh House



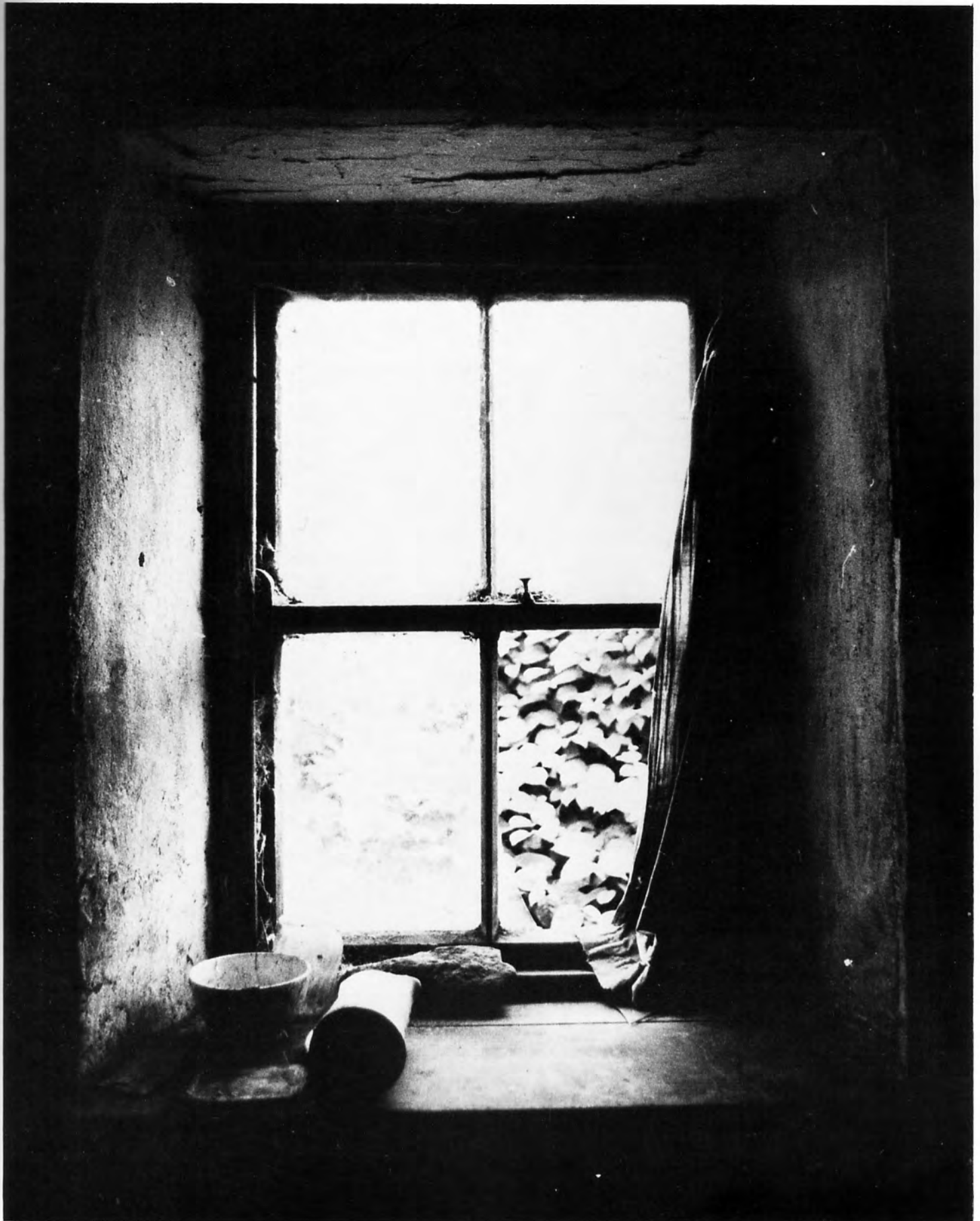
When any of these factors failed, the consequences on the lives of the people were tragic. Not owning their own land, and often years in arrears with their rent, these communities were under constant threat of eviction by absentee landlords. During this period, Donegal possessed forty-eight per cent of its pre-famine population, which was a fairly high percentage compared to other counties on the West coast of Ireland. Contemporary commentators attributed the relative stability of population to the development of small industries such as knitting and weaving, and to the practice of migratory labour to the Lagan Valley and to Scotland. After the Spring planting, the men would travel to these regions to work as general farm labourers and harvesters. They would return to Donegal in time for their own local harvest. On occasions the women would also work at the herring factories in the Shetlands and the Hebrides. This practice of migratory labour spared the region some of the more traumatic effects of permanent emigration, especially as the people were working in rural cultural environments similar to their own. As we shall see, it was the practice of seasonal migration that reinforced Scottish musical elements into the indigenous tradition.

The descriptions of South west Donegal by the investigators of the Congested Districts Board, Quaker Societies and gentleman travellers, portray an area suffering poverty. Almost all of these commentaries are consistent in a complete lack of comment on the social and cultural life of the people. They tend to depict an apathetic community in a state of paralysis because of the economic conditions.

'Four rough stone walls, often without any plaster covered with thatch 12 feet by 15 feet, or 18 feet constitute the home of a family of five or ten or twelve persons. The floors are the stone of the rocky hillside upon which the dwelling is built, and the smoke from the peat fire on the hearth, after filling the house, finds its final exit either by the door or the hole in the roof which serves for a chimney. There is usually one small window, but as you stoop to enter the low door, the blinding smoke for some time prevents you from seeing the inmates who are usually cowering over the peat or ling embers. When you have become sufficiently accustomed to the dim interior light, you find perhaps in addition to the family that a cow is lying in one corner and that there may be a loom at which some native cloth is made, or heaps of fishing nets now useless, alas, and gradually as you further explore the recesses, you see the miserable heap of rags which constitute the bed on which it may be a hen is quietly laying her egg. In a few we found the women busily engaged around the little window, embroidering handkerchiefs or beautifully worked fronts for babies' frocks for the Belfast market.'

R Tuke, *Report of the Congested Districts Board*, 1895.

The rich legacy that has come down to us from the last century of instrumental and vocal music is an indication that the society, despite its poverty, was not in a state of social apathy. It can be assumed that in post-famine rural Donegal the cultural life of the country house kitchen remained intact and even flourished. This is the paradox of South west Donegal. Under conditions which would have destroyed another culture, the musical tradition survived and even absorbed influences from England and Scotland without losing its essential integrity. The musical tradition was rooted in the communal lifestyle of the people. It was only when these communal structures were severely disrupted in this century that musical activity began to decline.



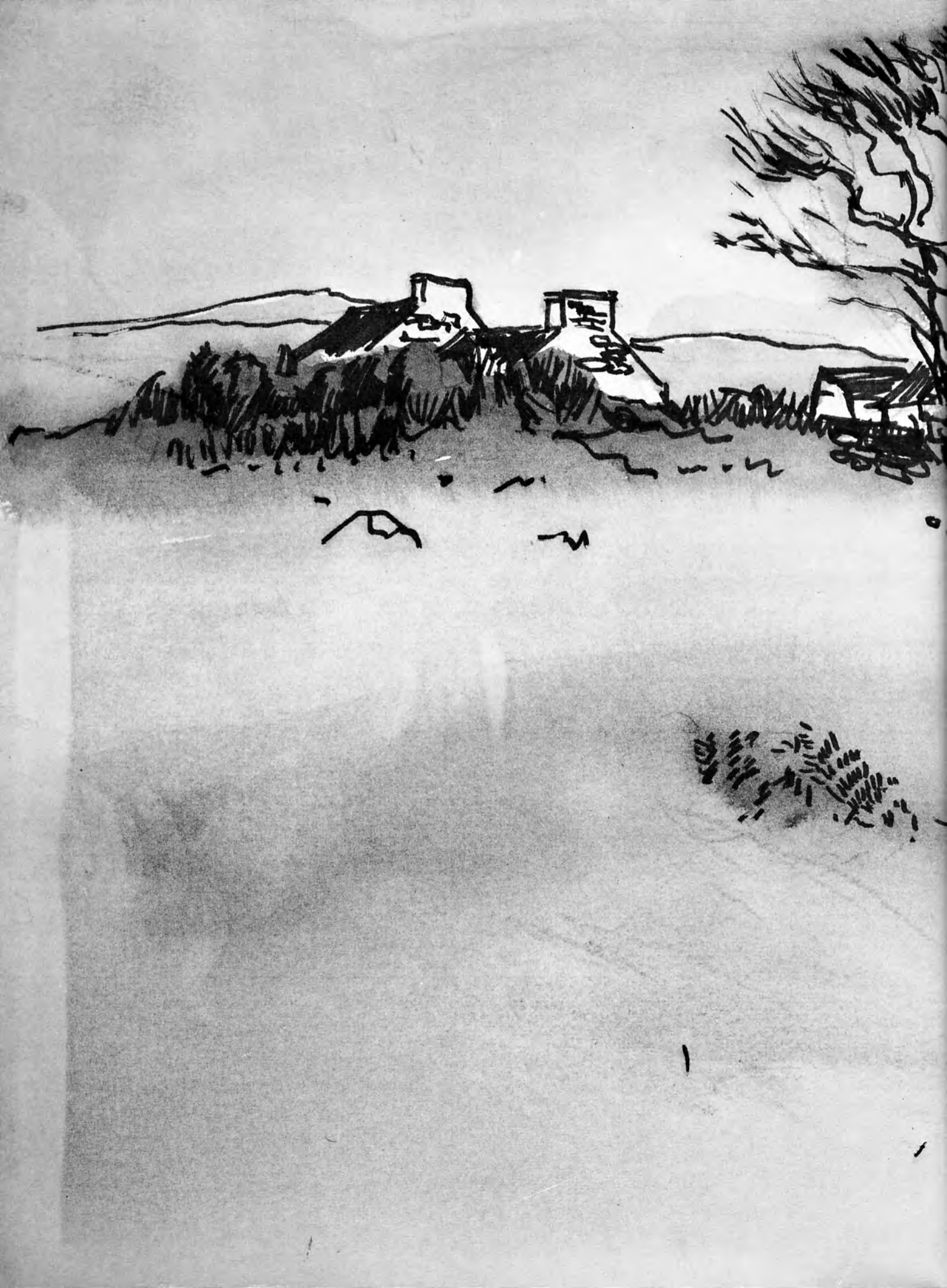


When the folk of this fishing village began their long walk down the dirt road to another life, the songs and stories passed with them or took on an underground existence buried somewhere in the minds of the emigrés. They were part of the texture of that life, and when it ended they were left behind with the broken bottles and smashed delft. (There is one woman from that village who still sings from time to time. One day in a quiet corner of a local pub she sang me a song in Irish which reflected the life of that village. It was about the salvaging of timber from a ship wrecked off the coast near the village. She sang in a rough careworn voice, but stopped her singing abruptly and told me she wouldn't sing me the last verse as her father, long since dead, had forbidden her to sing it, for it described how, when the village slept, the timber that they had laboriously taken from the sea was stolen from them in the night.)

A quiet hovered over the roofless houses as I starting climbing the steep brae through what was once the out-fields of the village. I followed the sea cliffs as they climbed steadily towards a plateau that was reminiscent of the mountainous regions of Crete. Above me four hawks glided casually over the sea. Several miles in the distance the coastline and cottages of Aranmore Island were visible; sometimes the wind carried disembodied voices from a nearby glen in my direction. But the proximity to human habitation was illusory. The broken country around me was empty and vacant for miles around. I made my way to the far slope of the brae through tangled country thick with gorse and heather. Below me the deep depression of a glen gradually came into view. It ran from the edge of a lake on my right until it reached the straight line of the sea cliffs. What lay at the bottom of the glen was a sight that transfixed me. I saw the smoke first, and then below it the lone thatched cabin from which the smoke had drifted. Surrounding the cabin were cultivated fields of oats and potatoes and meadowlands where a horse and a cow grazed, ignoring the barking of a dog that had sensed my presence. This hidden farm was at least four miles from the nearest road and situated near a stream that ran the length of the glen, through which seagulls swooped back and forth.

From my perch I could make out the ruins of what had been another farmhouse. In its own way a small community had once existed here. I felt the farms held a secret kinship with the fiddlers I had met in these parts; like them, it was an isolated survivor from another age. I made my way down the slippery slope to the cottage a quarter of a mile away. There was no answer to my persistent knocking. The windows were curtained off and the dog had disappeared. Smoke still poured from the chimney and I imagined that I could hear small sounds inside. I returned to the door and started talking through it. I mentioned the names of local farmers I knew and I asked directions. I was talking to myself; the house stood silent. I thought I heard someone cough and I knocked again, but began walking away without waiting for a reply. The milch cow and the sorrel horse ignored my passing, and after crossing the stream, I found a makeshift path of broken flagstones that led up through the narrow entrance of the glen. I began the slow, tedious climb to a ridge above the lake where I knew I would be able to see in the distance the long line of telephone poles that would guide me back to the place I had come from.









Con Cassidy

## Con Cassidy

— 2 —

The musical tradition of Donegal experienced several transformations over the years. The oral history of the area clearly indicates definite periods of transition and development. We can only rely on this folk memory and an analysis of the repertoire and styles that have come down to us in order to characterise the different stages in the music. Certain patterns are known for certain. Beginning in the late eighteenth century there existed a highly skilled sub-culture of travelling musicians in Donegal who exerted a strong influence on the instrumental dance music of the region. Their favourite instruments were the fiddle, the Highland bagpipes and, less often, the uilleann pipes. These travelling players were possibly the last link between the peasantry and the older court culture of the Gaelic order. The inaccessible and mountainous country of Donegal had probably become a place of refuge for these musicians in a time when the court culture was being suppressed by the English. It was the intervention of the harpers, poets and clan pipers into the musical life of the peasantry that radically affected the direction of music throughout Ireland. In Donegal where instruments were scarce the farmers absorbed the music of the travelling musicians through the medium of a complex style of mouth music. All the fiddlers we talked to agreed on this one point: that before the fiddle became widely used for dances there existed an elaborate style of lilting, or mouth music, that accompanied the dances. This lilting tradition existed alongside the instrumental tradition and may have been older, but was eventually supplanted by it.

According to the local musicians, it was a lilting style completely unlike anything heard today in other parts of Ireland where lilting is still practised. The mouth music possessed a distinct repertoire of tunes, many of which disappeared with the lilting style when the fiddle became popular. Since there was a period of time when the instrumental and vocal dance music traditions co-existed, there must have been a cross-influence of style. Some of the old lilting sound can still be heard in the graceful fiddling of Con Cassidy, the last active fiddler to be found in the fishing village of Teelin today. He is a first cousin of John and Frank Cassidy, two legendary fiddlers who helped make Teelin a centre among the coastal villages for country house dancing during the two decades between the First and Second World Wars. In talking to Con, a man in his mid-sixties, I was surprised to learn that the practice of local fiddling in Teelin dated back only to the opening years of the century. Before that it was either the local lilters or travelling musicians like the McConnells and the Dohertys who provided the music for the country house dances. It was John and Frank Cassidy along with other men of their generation born just before the turn of the century who picked up fiddling from the Doherty and McConnell families. They drew on the music of the travelling musicians and the tunes of the older generations of lilters in order to forge a local Teelin style of dance music. Con insisted that any fiddlers who happened to play before the time of the Cassidys in Teelin were 'scrapers' who had only mastered the very basic rudiments of the instruments and played only a few tunes. He could only

remember one such player. I asked him how he could be sure that there weren't good fiddlers in Teelin 100 or 150 years ago. He answered me simply: 'Our parents would have mentioned any good fiddler to us.' He was right. In Teelin, a community that has persisted in speaking Irish when it has gone out of fashion in nearby villages, the folk memory is a long one, and singers and dancers who lived generations ago are still talked about.

What can be gathered from the development of dance music in Teelin is a recent model of a process that must have affected other Donegal communities over a two hundred year period. In this process of musical change, isolated communities possessed a tradition of vocal music as a result of their exposure to instrumental music through the repeated visits of travelling musicians eventually learned to play these instruments themselves, and abandoned the vocal music. Con Cassidy pointed out that singing as well as liling suffered from the popular taste for fiddling and ceased to be as common a practice at the house parties as it once was.

Since the adaptation of the fiddle by the rural communities was staggered over two hundred years, and due to the fact that the various districts were often separated by natural boundaries and bad roads, several styles of fiddling sharing common characteristics developed in Donegal (see appendix on fiddle styles).

Farmhouse,  
Glencolumbkille,  
Co Donegal



When we first met Con Cassidy he claimed he could give us only a half hour's worth of music as he was out of practice. That first session lasted well into the early hours of the morning. Since that time we had had many sessions in which Con unearthed some of the lovely tunes which were played at the dances fifty years ago. He plays in a light quick-fingered style which Frank Cassidy had adopted from the playing of Alec McConnell. Like the other Teelin fiddlers of that generation, Con steers away from playing in what is known as the 'Pipers' style' with its attempt to duplicate the droning sounds of the Highland pipes. The effect of his playing is that of a long continuous flow of melody, as opposed to the more rhythmic staccato short-bow style that is popular in Glencolumbkille and in Kilcar. In the following interview, Con and his wife Mary Kate talked about the music, the dancing, and a certain quality of life that was once found in Teelin.

## Conversation with Con and Mary Kate Cassidy

- A.F. Were those Irish marches you were playing just now Con?
- C.C. No, I wouldn't think so. If my memory serves me right, it was an English army brass band that was recruiting on a fair day in Carrick about 1917. If they managed to get a shilling into your pocket, off you went into the army. Frank Cassidy would learn these marches from the brass bands. He was very quick to pick up music. There was a priest in Carrick who was very friendly with Frank's sisters who were running a drapery shop in Carrick. He was very musical and he had a gramophone. Frank was playing for a while and the priest said to him: 'Well now Frank, I'd like to test your ear and I'm going to play a difficult piece of classical music till I see about how many times I would have to play it for you to pick it up.' So he played it once, and when he was finished, Frank says: 'Father, play it again please.' So he played it a second time, and Frank played it on the fiddle note for note. Now twice was very good for classical piece.
- A.F. Did most of the traditional tunes that Frank played come from the Teelin area, or were they from outside the townland?
- C.C. He got a good few of his tunes from the Doherty's and there was a crowd before them, the McConnells, who he learned a lot from. Frank and his brother Johnny were the first of the Cassidys to play the fiddle. My father was musical but he never played an instrument. In those days these travelling people were around quite often playing for dances and often stopped for months in Teelin. Frank and Johnny had every opportunity to pick up their tunes. They had dances every night and when they weren't playing at night, they were playing in the house they were stopping in during the daytime.



There was continually music. I never really heard any good fiddlers in Teelin before that crowd who learned from the Dohertys and the McConnells. They were nearly the one age, Frank Cassidy, Mick McShane, Jimmy Lyons. They were the first Teelin men to play good fiddle that I head of. Before that, the people of this area preferred the pipes. There came a bloke around, Hughie Gallagher, and where he would be the whole district would be running to that house. I was too small a boy to take any interest in the music, but I couldn't believe my ears when I heard the sound of the pipes way off in the distance. I wouldn't be allowed near that house, I was too small. I remember sitting on a hill about a quarter mile distance from where that man was playing. I remember sitting to bedtime if I didn't get lonely. But there was no pipe players in Teelin that I knowed of. There wasn't much instrumental players in Teelin before Frank's time. Singing was the great go in those days. Before Frank there might be a mouth organ, or a trump (jew's harp) or maybe two together lilting a tune. There were great lilters; much better than I could hear on Radio Eireann now. There was a man down the road there, he was the best lilter I ever heard. I'd as love to listen to him as any instrument because he could put variations in at any old time; he was wonderful.

A.F. Did the dancing change when the fiddle became popular?

C.C. No, it never changed till the old jazz came in and the old-fashioned dances went out except for the old waltz... Now Frank has a sort of style of his own on the fiddle even when he took it off the gramophone. He would put in his own variations — he hadn't the Doherty style, he played more in the McConnell style, he was a long bower. While Mick McShane and Conny Haughey were short bowers.

A.F. I was always under the impression that fiddling was going on in Teelin for hundreds of years.

C.C. No. There were a few old men; they weren't up to standard. You know now before my time there were a lot more fiddlers in Glencolumbkille than there is now. I would say fiddling there goes back a good bit. On the way into the glen there was a man called John Mosey McGinly, his father was Mosey then he was called John Mosey. He was the best traditional fiddle player in Ireland according to all the stories we heard about him. They held a fleadh in those days; he was at a big gathering somewhere in Ireland. He wore very simple clothes — a homespun jacket and he didn't carry any case, he had his fiddle in a canvas bag. All the big noises were there. It was only the big noises who could afford to run these things in the old days. They looked on John as nothing. What could he play? What could he know about the fiddle? Eventually some man spoke in his favour and he got on to whatever sort of stage was there and started to play. But before he did start to play at all, they were gathering up stones and bits of sod to throw at him. He wasn't playing long when the stones were dropped down by their sides. He won that contest.

A.F. Where did you learn 'Kitty in the Lane?'

C.C. I learned it from an old lady up above. When she was sitting at the fire in good humour you would hear her lilting this tune. We weren't trying to pick it up. I don't know where she got it from, but she came across the water from the parish of Kilcar.

- A.F. How did you learn to play the fiddle?
- C.C. I don't think I ever got onto it, but I started it when I was eight or nine. My father was interested in me taking on the fiddle. He took me down to Frank Cassidy one night. Frank was much older than I was. He was going out with a girl friend and he was probably annoyed he had to stay in this night to learn me something on the fiddle. The tune he started to learn me was the 'Money Musk', just the bones of it. I got halfway through it, I was slow to learn. I didn't go down anymore then, I was just working away on my own in a neighbour's house where there was a tin fiddle. Sometime you're better off to learn something from your own brain than to go to somebody else. You might get a wee bit upset by not being quick enough.
- A.F. When did you start playing for dances?
- C.C. We used to play three or four together. I was maybe sixteen or seventeen; before that we weren't allowed to dance. They were all in country houses. Every kitchen was big and they were always overcrowded. There'd be half as many outside the door dancing. I often seen them dancing on the pier. Oh, that was great go in the summertime. I remember Francie Byrne, he spent three or four winters in Teelin. He was in Teelin every night. I would say he was very musical. He would come by boat from across the water and every time he came he had a new tune with him, a new highland or jig every time. They would always start the time of October on the haystacks. There might be four or five haystacks to make on the one day; well, they couldn't have four or five dances. There would be one or two girls in those houses who would invite the other girls into the area. The Highland quicksteps, quadrilles, barndances and lancers were all the go. You would pull a girl out whether she danced or not. She soon come on to the step. The old stepdance was called the breakdown. The dancer would change the steps any time he wanted. They had every sort of trick. Sometimes the door would be taken off the hinges and placed on the floor: that way the dancer could make plenty of noise. There would be two facing the other, then they would change; the man who was up would go down.
- M.K.C. So the girls would take a fancy to them.
- A.F. What type of tunes would you play for the breakdown?
- C.C. Reels always; oh they had their special reels. I once saw two people dance the 'Maggie Pickie' — the tongs would be laid out on the floor and opened out a bit. The dancer could go right over it and the secret was not to touch the tongs at all. It was wonderful how it could be done.
- A.F. Would you learn most of your tunes at the dances?
- C.C. Aye.
- A.F. Would you ever visit a fiddler in his house?
- C.C. No, never, I wasn't that interested then.
- A.F. How long would the dances go on for?

- C.C. They'd go from eight or nine to six o'clock in the morning at times. Sometimes earlier. It would be getting dark before the stacks would be finished and tea would be over; maybe there were a few drinks and maybe there'd be a fiddler in the crowd that was helping with the stack. He might start to play and it would begin there and then at the stacks. It was a great old time. People seemed to enjoy life better than they do now. They had no money. They didn't want no money. Nowadays you can't rise out unless you have money. A different life altogether... The first thing that stopped the dancing; they put all these partitions in the kitchen and they were too small for dancing. One got the idea from the other, and at long last all the country houses had partitions.
- M.K.C. The life was different in the country now as to whom we were growing up. We did nothing at night, but the night you would have a date with a boy outside and away walking for the night. And maybe some girls were lucky enough to have a man who had a few shillings in his pocket and would buy them a packet a sweets. That pleased them well enough. Well, he was now only six pennies out of pocket with his girl for the night. In the days gone by, there never was a man who took a girl for a cup of tea that I know of, unless he came from some other land. You wouldn't get a cup of tea from your man and you were like a bear with hunger, coming home looking for a cup of tea. That was in my day. I don't know what happened before that. Ten times worse I suppose!
- C.C. They were rough fiddlers before Frank and his crowd. I remember an old man being put up at our house, where I was brought up, towards Bunglas. My fiddle was hung up on the wall. 'Oh,' I says, 'Will you play a tune?' 'Indeed,' he says, 'I will.' So he took down the fiddle and rosined up the bow. I thought he'd make two shares out of the bow. He took the hair away out about nine inches on the rod. He broke the rosin with his fingers and then he drew it on the bow. I couldn't see him behind a cloud of rosin. He started and he played 'Drowsy Maggie', and when he finished, he says: 'My good lad, two more of them would finish her.' You see the fiddle would go to pieces after two more tunes like that. They were good rough players.



6/15

Con Casady

Con Casady October 78

October 78



Mickey and  
Francie Byrne

## Mickey and Francie Byrne

— 3 —

We met Mickey Byrne alongside the road on St John's Eve. He was one of a small group of old men who were supervising a large bonfire around which a score of children were playing. St John's night occurs on Midsummer's Eve and is a Christianised survival of a pagan celebration. From the brae we were standing on I could see several bonfires casting their glow over the glens. Standing together in the summer twilight Mickey began telling us that in the old days when they celebrated this night as well as the bonfires, there were riddling games and in some of the glens the people would have rams' horns which would be sounded from the hill tops throughout the night. The image of the countryside ringing and echoing with the sound of distant rams' horns — a practice reminiscent of the Balkans — was somewhat overwhelming. But Mickey is like that. With a wry smile and an occasional twinkle in his eye, he will produce an image or an anecdote that put us *that* close to an older world. He will start with the ritual phrase, 'The ones that was in it in those days...' and off he would take us on an excursion into a distant time that is still a reality for him. His role as a shanachie is so strongly bred into him that we were told he is in the habit of sitting in a neighbour's house every day to watch the news on the television. He will then visit or go raking in other houses to explain to his neighbours what went on in the world that day.

Of the fiddlers we met with, Mickey and his brother Francie Byrne epitomise the country house dance tradition. With their wealth of rare and ancient tunes their music could only be compared to that of John Doherty. But just as important is the fact that their fiddling is steeped in the atmosphere of the country house dance. They use cross-rhythms, syncopation and wild sounding drones that could only have originated in the electric atmosphere of the all-night dance. When they pick up their fiddles they will stand to the far side of the kitchen opposite the turf range as if to leave enough room for invisible dancers. It is an old, ingrained habit of theirs, and they can play standing up for hours at a time. The fact that they are brothers with long experience of playing together contributes to the force of their music. Together they sound like one instrument. Francie, now in his mid-seventies and Mickey, over eighty, remember the ornate lilt of the old people of their district when they were children. It was the practice at that time for the men and women to sit together on a bench lilt for the dancers. The men would lilt the low octave of a tune and the women would lilt the high octave. The brothers remember songs in Irish being sung this way in octaves by groups of men and women. Mickey and Francie have translated this style of octaves into their fiddling, the result being what Mickey likes to call 'a terrible good, strong sound'. Today the brothers regret the passing of the old lilt style for many old tunes died with it. When they were younger they were so enthusiastic about fiddling that they didn't pay as much attention to the old music of the lilters as they should have. However, they absorbed some of the repertoire of the lilters, like 'Mary O' the Wisp' of which Francie tells this story:



Mickey Byrne, Kileas

John Deane '78



Francis Byrne, Kilkenny

or 1978



'Mary o' the Wisp was the Landlord's serving girl. That was her by-name. She saved the Landlord's daughter — Moll Na Tiarna. There was a terrible good-looking boy working for the Landlord and didn't he and Moll fall in love. The Landlord cautioned her if she didn't give him up he'd shoot the both of them. He would keep watch for them at the byre with his gun. One night he was looking out and he eyed them walking down the foot-path, his own daughter and Mary and serving girl going over that way to meet the young lad. It happened to be the time of the harvest. There was a terrible clump of land with grass cocks. When the hay was to be mowed and be shooked and turned with rakes, they would make grass cocks first. It was a terrible good way of drying. If then you would be sure a day might be dry you could handcock these grass cocks without shaking them. Mary eyed the Landlord keeping a lookout in the byre. So she left the other girl and she came over to the Landlord's house. Moll and the boy went down to this field where there was shrubbery and that was where they used to be. As soon as they went down, Mary eyed the Landlord fixing the gun. Mary went down to the field to give them the warning. When they had gone she turned and saw the Landlord coming. 'What are you doing down there?' he asked, 'Oh,' she said, 'I'm picking. I went through the grass cocks to get a half a dry one for the calf.' It was sensible enough, you see... and away he went. By the time he went down to search for them they were gone. And when he came back again after a long time down, Mary was sitting at one side of the fire and Moll sitting at the other side, and they were lilting this tune.'

Mickey was the first of the brothers to take up the fiddle, receiving the occasional lesson from a local player called Pat Harvey, who was a difficult teacher and neglected to teach Mickey how to tune the instrument. Mickey was twelve at the time. Francie, who was around eight years old, got impatient with the fiddle being out of tune and one day approached his National School teacher who had been teaching his class the rudiments of musical theory. After a class that day she took Francie aside and taught him how to tune Mickey's fiddle. She likened the interval between each adjacent string to the call of the cuckoo. The first part of the call was the 'E' string, the second was the 'A' string and this would be replicated at a different pitch between the 'A' and 'D' and the 'D' and 'G' string. It was in this way that Francie learned to tune and then to eventually play the fiddle. Today, together with John Doherty, he must be considered as the leading exponent of the Donegal style of fiddling.

Unlike Teelin, Kilcar had a long tradition of fiddling, and aside from the travelling players who passed by, there were two good local fiddlers, Pat Harvey and John Doogan, whom the brothers learned from. These men in turn had been taught by the virtuoso fiddler of Glencolumbkille, John Mosey McGinley. Another strong influence on the brothers' playing was the piping of a cousin of John Doherty's, a travelling musician called Mickey Gallagher. He exerted a strong influence on the brothers' repertoire and reinforced the piping inflexions in their fiddling that were already part of the local style. Tunes such as 'King of the Pipers', 'King Billy's Rambles', 'Gallagher's Jig' and 'Brian Boru's March' originally must have been pipe tunes most likely learned from Mickey Gallagher. The version of 'Brian Boru's March' that Francie plays is an older, and possibly more accurate version of the simplistic tune popularised today on the radio. The arpeggios in the second part of the tune may have their origins in the old harping tradition.



During the period that the brothers were mastering the fiddle, Teelin had become an active centre for country house dancing and boasted several accomplished fiddlers. The Byrnes naturally gravitated to Teelin. They would row a fishing boat across Teelin bay from Derrylahan harbour to play for the dances that were often held on the pier. Con Cassidy remembers Francie Byrne spending entire winters in Teelin playing for the dances.

When he was in his twenties, Francie Byrne went to Scotland to work as a labourer in Kilsythe, near Glasgow. He remembers that time as being very active musically. There was a good bit of Scottish fiddling around and he was also exposed to the fiddling of emigrant labourers from other parts of Ireland. The Irish held separate dances from the Scots and Francie was one of the few Irish fiddlers to play for the Scottish dances. Though he picked up tunes from the Irish players, in the end run it was understandably the Scottish fiddling that had the most influence on his music. Though his exposure to other schools of fiddling increased his technical range and repertoire, he still plays in the local Kilcar style, which in many ways closely resembles the type of Scottish fiddling to be heard on Cape Breton Island today, with the evocation of the pipes through the use of drones and staccato bowing.

Some of his most vivid memories of that period in Scotland were of the street buskers in Glasgow. They used to play music in the narrow alley-ways of the tenements, for the sound of the instruments would echo loudly in those back streets. One group he noted consisted of a fiddler, button-accordion player, a dancer and a collector. While the musicians played, the dancer would beat out a loud rhythm with his feet on a portable wickerwork 'floor' that he carried around with him. The collector, who was dressed like Charlie Chaplin, would pass the hat around for the money that fell from the windows.

In talking to Mickey, I decided to concentrate on his deep knowledge of the oral history of South-west Donegal to see if I could garner background information about the development of the music in the area. His responses confirmed certain things that had been mentioned by other fiddlers or were apparent in their music. The oral history that Mickey has shows that the basis of the shared musical culture of Donegal and the Highlands of Scotland was in the cross-emigration that took place between the regions. It also indicates that the fiddle was introduced to Donegal from Scotland. But possibly the most surprising piece of information to come from Mickey is the folk memory of a bowed instrument that preceded the violin. This instrument is certainly medieval in origin, and, judging from Mickey's description of its construction and melodic range, must be akin to the medieval rebec, and the Arabic rebab.

Francie and  
Mickey Byrne  
outside their  
house

## Conversation with Mickey Byrne

- A.F. How did the Highlands come to Donegal?
- M.B. The Scots were fighting themselves and the British. The British defeated them and a lot of them were chased across the water to the North of Donegal. They didn't know nothing about Highlands and that kind of music in Donegal, till these [Scots] came across. And there were plenty of them [Scots] you see, who never left it again. They had all these great Highlands and Scotch tunes. Well again, after that, when they were fighting again with the British, a lot of Irish left the North and went over to the Highlands of Scotland. They're there still and the Highland Gaelic in it is similar to the Irish here — well, the music is the same out there in the Highlands.
- A.F. What instrument would they play?
- M.B. The most of them in the Highlands used to play the pipes.
- A.F. What type of music was here in Donegal before then?
- M.B. Oh, the reels, that's what they got on to. There was no-one living in Donegal at first. It was from these other provinces they came, from Munster, Leinster and Connaught. That was the first music they had, the reels and the old Irish airs. They knew nothing else at that time, and the instrument they played on the most was the harp.
- A.F. Did the harpers give the fiddlers much music?
- M.B. Oh, they did.
- A.F. Would the harpers play for dancers?
- M.B. Oh, it was a rare thing. The harpers would play the airs of songs that was the best they could do, and laments. That was the practice, but they knew all these reels and they could teach them to the fiddlers... There used to be fiddlers or pipers and that kind of work. But as soon as they [harpers] played one of these tunes, a few of the reels, they [fiddlers] were all set for them. They'd follow the harpers around for a fortnight till they got these tunes learned off of them [harpers] and they [the tunes] would spread with the fiddlers and pipers.

- A.F. Did you ever hear any stories about the first fiddles to come to Donegal?
- M.B. When the fiddle first came to Donegal, it wasn't the flat ones that's in it now, you know. In that time, there were fiddles that had a stoop to the neck you see, the neck was sort of bent. They used to call them the crooked-necked fiddle. They called it in Irish *an fhídeal cham*, there was a turn in the neck. They kept at those till these [violins] come across the water from Scotland. These were a different make then. If you didn't learn to play these crooked-neck fiddles first [before the standard violin] you'd never get on to them. And then there came another crowd around and they made different fiddles, they were travelling people called the tinsmiths. They made the tin fiddles. There was terrible nice music in them.
- A.F. Would the class of music have been the same on the crooked-neck fiddle as they are playing now?
- M.B. They couldn't play the style of music they are playing now. Those fiddles were like the pipes, they couldn't change scale. But then they got on to these pipes as well that didn't have to be blown into at all. When they got on to them, they made out they were in heaven, because it was easy played and you could keep going from morning to night.
- A.F. Did the fiddlers play much with pipers?
- M.B. No, there weren't a lot of fiddlers in them days.
- A.F. When did the fiddle get popular?
- M.B. They got popular about two hundred years ago, but before that there'd be one every ten miles, fifteen miles, twenty miles... They used to have in them days what they used to call penny-dancing. They [the fiddlers] used to have so much money that the bottom would go way out of the pocket. There was a crowd of people in it, and the ones that couldn't get in they'd pay to be outside just to listen to them [fiddlers]. In the country houses they'd play away every day till it be day clear in the morning.
- A.F. How did the travelling players come into existence?
- M.B. There were people long ago when the landlords were strong and rent was very dear, and they wouldn't please as far as paying the money the landlords were looking for. And then the landlords evicted them. The travelling people were the rich people long ago in Erin when they had their own rights, but they had come down. The Dohertys and the McConnells they were the real Irish race, every one of them. They wouldn't please the foreigners. They were true to the places where they were born and raised, and wouldn't give the foreigners the money. So they [landlords] took the land from them and they went about here and there and have been going about since. Them's the ones that spread the music in this part, the mountainy places and every other place. They made the fiddle popular — they made fiddles of their own, square fiddles, they used to call it the box fiddles. They were putting the right neck on it. If you were outside you wouldn't know the difference between them and the violins, it was a terrible good strong sound. Ah, but if you weren't used to them you couldn't play them, because the bow would be coming on the side. There was no curve to the side, they were made straight, you see.

- A.F. What age were you when you started the fiddle?
- M.B. I started the fiddle at twelve years. We used to teach ourselves and when other men came in we would get on to their music. There was one man in the town we called Pat Harvey he was a terrible good fiddler. Pat Harvey used to come up here often. If Pat Harvey made out that you were playing a tune right he'd come up and be good humoured and play away, but if he made out you weren't playing it right, he wouldn't pay attention to you, he'd walk out and you wouldn't see him again for a year. But then if he made out you were very easy learning the tunes, that you could play every one he played, he wouldn't come half the time then. The only way you could get on to that man's tunes was that you wouldn't pay no attention to them only just listen to them.
- A.F. What was Gallagher the travelling piper like?
- M.B. He was a terrible tall strong man, all heavy set. He was a sergeant in the militia; he would go away every year for a month. He was married to a sister of Mickey McConnell and used to be along with them. Alec and Mickey were good players; they came from the lower part of this county. They were the best making these tin fiddles in the county; there was no beating them. And we used to be with Frank Cassidy often. Frank Cassidy was the kind man who had gentle ways and if you didn't come on his ways — let's say he'd play two or three tunes and if you didn't come on his ways he'd stop altogether. And it's not with any man he'd play with at all. He'd play away from you for a week if you didn't come on his ways.
- A.F. What do you reckon killed the country house dancing?
- M.B. The town ones weren't making enough money with all the dancing going through the houses. So they put up the halls and later they brought in the jazz music. That finished it. Then the fiddlers wouldn't play the jazz tunes; wouldn't content the mind; it was no music at all! They liked the hard reel, with a bit of birl into the bow — and playing double time.



Francie Byrne



## Danny O'Donnell

When an oral folk culture is transplanted into an urban environment, it is highly unlikely that it will survive with its form intact. The culture can be completely abandoned by the emigrants' attempting to integrate themselves with the mainstream society. Another alternative, particularly in the case of music, is that the tradition will be synthesised with already existing elements found in the new environment. A third pattern, the most difficult, occurs when the musical culture manages to maintain a separate identity from the multitude of musical styles present in the urban setting. This can happen when constant emigration reinforces a sense of continuity between the home culture and the emigrants. In some ways, this last pattern was the fate of Irish music in the United States. But in order to survive, the music paid a price. Irish musicians living in the United States would find themselves next-door neighbours to musicians from distant counties whom they would have hardly encountered in the country. In addition to this, during the Twenties and Thirties, recordings of Irish music, particularly the music of Sligo, became popular. It was in the United States that the first commercial recordings of Irish traditional music were made. The result of these innovations was the centralisation of repertoire and style. Regional distinctions were blurred. But there was a definite bias in this transformation of the music towards the commercial successful Sligo music which dominated the recordings.

Danny O'Donnell's fiddling is significant in relation to these patterns. He has spent the greater part of his adult life in the United States and Scotland. In Scotland he associated himself with the followers of Scott Skinner and researched many of Skinner's unpublished manuscripts. During his time in the United States he played most of his music with Sligo players like Larry Redigan and Ladd O'Bierne. Like Francie Byrne, he took advantage of this musical experience to enlarge his repertoire and improve his playing technique, but when he returned to Donegal, he still played in the same basic style he had brought out with him from his native Rosses.

His musical experience in Scotland was less strange to him than the music heard in the States, as the particular school of Scottish fiddling represented by Scott Skinner had been popular in the Rosses. His description of how this came about is relevant. In the 1920s the decline of musical activity in the countryside around Dungloe parallels the current state of fiddling in South-west Donegal today. There were only a small group of fiddlers and dances would be held only a few times a year in National Schools. This was the same decade that Teelin was undergoing a golden age of fiddling and country house dancing. At that time the only fiddler of regional significance actively playing in the Rosses was Neili Boyle, who had learned his tunes and his playing style from his mother who was a skilled lilter. In general the instrumental dance music was conforming to a familiar pattern of decline towards extinction. The older players were dying, with few younger people taking their place in continuing the music. The remaining players, due to diminished contact with other fiddlers, had lost a greater part of the repertoire and limited themselves to playing the standard popular



jigs, reels and highlands. The small group of younger fiddlers found themselves the inheritors of a local tradition that was atrophying. In a last ditch attempt to breathe new life into the music, Danny O'Donnell and the fiddlers of his generation looked for inspiration outside the Rosses towards an alternative school of fiddling. Oddly enough it wasn't to South-west Donegal, which boasted an active healthy tradition, that they turned. The lack of good roads and the mountainous country that lay between the two districts prevented any sustained contact. At that time, Danny O'Donnell had little knowledge of the fiddling that existed in South-west Donegal. The only place outside of their district that the Rosses people had any continuous contact with was Scotland, where many of them would travel as seasonal labourers and eventually as long-term emigrants.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, Scotland was experiencing a revival of fiddling. The central figure of this revival was J. Scott Skinner, a virtuoso player and composer with a mixed background in traditional and classical violin playing. Skinner played and composed in a style that attempted to graft onto Scottish fiddle music the playing technique and romantic flourishes of European violin playing. His music was part of a general cultural movement of the period that romanticised a watered-down image of the Highland folk culture, which itself was on the road to extinction, due to the policy of systematic eviction on the part of English landlords and clan chieftains.

Much of Skinner's music is in dubious taste, but it contained a solid enough core of traditional fiddling to be of use to the Rosses fiddlers, who looked to Skinner for tunes and playing technique. Their first contact with the Scottish style was appropriately enough through a popular violin tutor, originating in Scotland. Later on this contact was reinforced through the circulation of Skinner's recordings, the first of which were made in 1905 on old Edison cylinders. Skinner's recording career lasted until 1922, and played a crucial part in establishing his popularity with other fiddlers. For those Rosses men who lived in Scotland, there were also fiddlers' societies which met regularly in the towns and cities, and were a vital resource for Scottish music. Fortunately these societies played Scottish tunes other than Skinner's compositions and adaptations. It is interesting to compare the direction Skinner's music took in Scotland and Donegal after his death. Today most of Skinner's followers in Scotland have lost contact with the element of traditional dance music in Skinner's work, and have tended to play his tunes in even more of a classical style than Skinner originally played. In contrast, the Donegal fiddlers I have heard who play Skinner's music concentrate on the traditional element in Skinner's compositions, the result being that their renditions of Skinner's tunes are invariably more exciting than the Scottish players'. In Donegal, Skinner's music was reintegrated to the oral tradition and subordinated to its primary function as dance music.

The introduction of Skinner's music represents the last stage in the development of fiddling in Donegal. It was an ambiguous development, for it was the harbinger of a growing European and urban influence on the musical tastes of the musicians and listeners. The attempt by fiddlers of Danny O'Donnell's generation to revive fiddling in the Rosses proved in vain. From the 1930s onwards, permanent emigration from the Rosses accelerated. A region whose population had actually increased in the post-famine period began to suffer severe population decline which resulted in a general social apathy and isolation among those who stayed behind. It was a difficult atmosphere for fiddling to survive in, and in the case of the Rosses, where the tradition had already been severely weakened, it proved fatal.

## Conversation with Danny O'Donnell

A.F. How did you get on to the fiddle Danny?

D.O'D. I grew up in the 1920s in Meenafanad. I remember when I started to go out to dances... the common thing at that time in our part of the Rosses wasn't even two fiddlers. Only one fiddler would play if there was a dance in the school-house, which would only be a few times a year. There wasn't an abundance of fiddlers like you had in the Glencolumbkille-Kilcar area, but the fiddlers that were in the Rosses were noted fiddlers.

In my case it was my uncle Jimmy Doherty, from the island of Cruit, who taught me. He had spent all his life since the age of sixteen across the water in Scotland. He was a gifted man on the violin but not in the traditional Irish style. He was strictly reared in the Scottish style of playing, and this had an influence on us young ones learning. There was also a tutor out that was the bible of most of the young players in Scotland and for those of us who went out from the Rosses to Scotland who took up the violin. It was called *The Young Violinist and Duet Book* by William C. Honeyman. It was a marvelous book — you could almost teach yourself from it.

A.F. Did it contain traditional music?

D.O'D. One of the famous pieces in that book was 'The Wounded Hussar', an old air. The idea of putting it in was to teach you how to move up to second position. Well, that air and a lot of the hornpipes in that tutor were taken up by the Rosses fiddlers. John Doherty used to visit these houses where a young person would be trying to learn tunes from this book. Well, Johnny with his keen ear picked up every last note of some of these tunes. You can hear the influence of that tutor on certain pieces he plays, like 'The Wounded Hussar' and 'The Bluebells of Scotland'. Honeyman had a beautiful set of variations on that tune; well John plays all the variations and many more of his own invention.

A.F. Was there a strong tradition of fiddling on Cruit Island?

D.O'D. They were a very musical people. There was something about the fiddle that appealed to the Rosses people, and at the same time many of them went out to Scotland where they heard the music of Scott Skinner and William Mackenzie Murdoch. All that combined to give the Rosses people a different outlook on fiddling. I noticed a vast difference between the Rosses and the Kilcar-Glencolumbkille area. That part was more isolated from the rest of the county. There they developed a style of fiddling and played tunes that up to recently hadn't been heard outside that area. But in the Rosses the Irish tunes were fairly commonplace and the more unusual ones they played were picked up in Scotland.

A.F. Are you saying that there was an older, more Irish type of music that was supplanted by the Scottish style of fiddling?

D.O'D. If you go back further than that, in my mother's time, the old people were fond of liltin'. They could lilt a tune that would mock your best fiddling. When they had house parties, you would get a couple of the best of them that would lilt all night for the dances. It was the women mostly who did the liltin'. I remember hearing Michael Coleman playing Miss McCloud's reel for the first time. I had heard it lilted since I was a child and was amazed to hear the exact tune he played was in the liltin' of the women. Now we had no connection with Sligo at all, so I gathered from that that the liltin' must have been a very old widespread practice...

One of my great pals, Paddy Boner of Cruihagmore, his mother was a notorious lilter. The fiddler she remembers best was John O'Donnell — Johnny Sean More, his brother James was the father of the great writer Peadar O'Donnell... Well I got some of my first tunes from James Sean More. He had a calm, easy-going style; he didn't follow the Scottish style — he didn't go for the strict tempo. He was one of the older school. He played along with Turlough MacSweeney in the old days a hundred years ago. He used a slurred or long-bow style.

A.F. Did the liltin' influence the fiddling at all?

D.O'D. It definitely was an influence on Neili Boyle; his mother actually lilted the tunes to him that he played on the fiddle. He did have the lilt, with the decorations in his fingering on the fiddle. The rolls and triplets that he played all came from the liltin'. You could always tell the snatches of the old music from the piping of Turlough MacSweeney and from the liltin'.

A.F. What was Neili Boyle like?

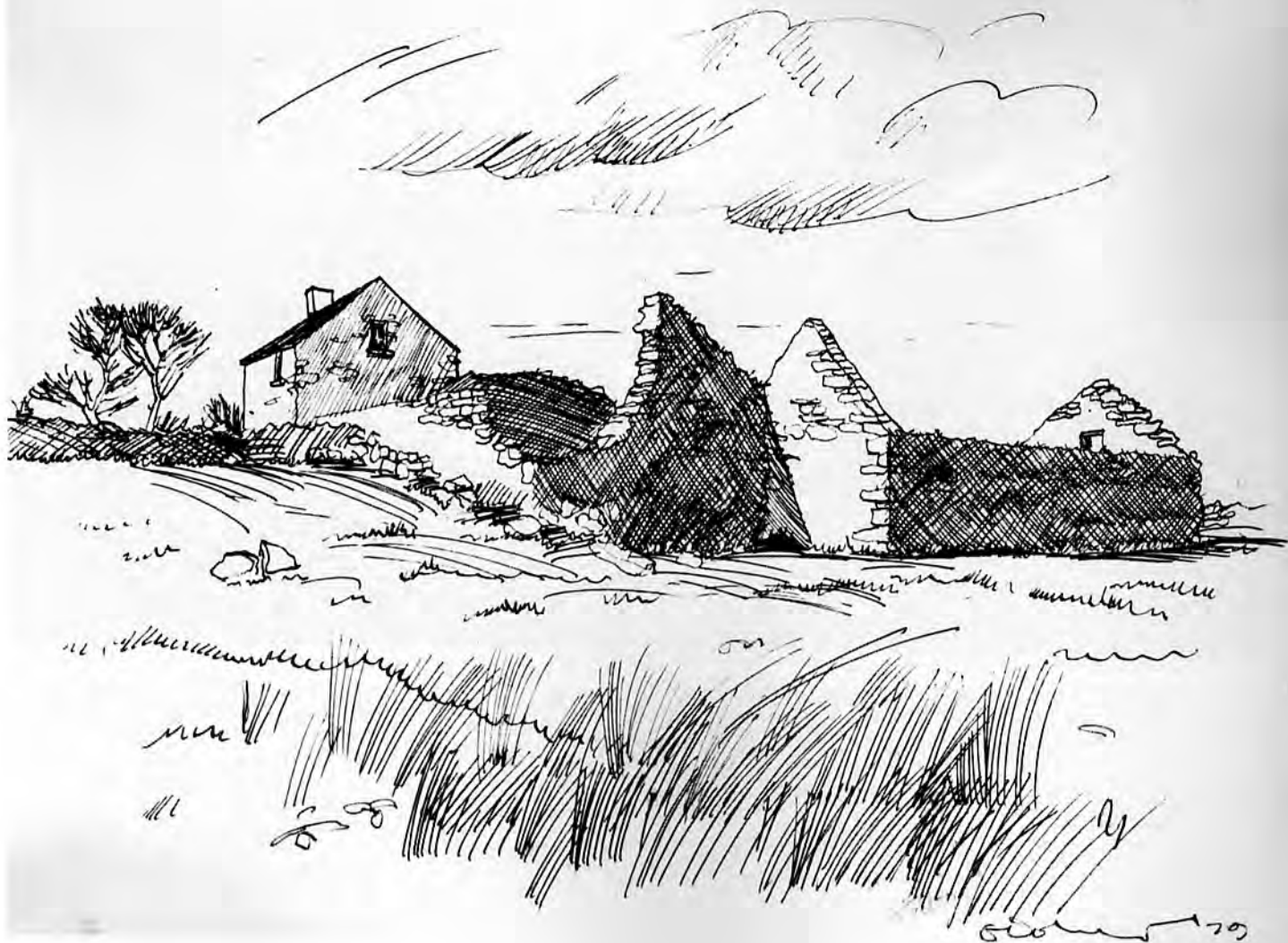
D.O'D. Neili Boyle was a small vigorous man, a real stage personality who had good Gaelic and English. His mother had many good Gaelic songs as well as liltin' tunes. They were a family full of music. He was born in America and originally played jazz violin for a living, though he had the old music from his mother. He met Frank O'Higgins in Dublin, who played both classical and traditional. Well, he convinced Neili to take up the old music again.

A.F. What type of dance would they be dancing in the Rosses?

D.O'D. The common dances at that time were the quadrilles, the sets and the lancers. Johnny Doherty plays old lancers tunes that I haven't heard since those days when I was a mere child. They were called group dances. The other dances, like the highlands and the mazurkas, were called round dances, just because one couple danced them round the floor.

A.F. What were the origins of the highlands in Donegal?

D.O'D. They go back a very long time. There's two forms of the highland fling and the highland schottische. The Donegal people preferred the highland fling style. As the jazz music came in they lost the old steps...  
...It was originally a very graceful dance, but as the generations passed by, the old steps were gone by the board ... Kilcar and Glencolumbkille are the only places in Donegal where they dance the old form of the Highland in good style... There are more highlands in that district I never heard before, not even in Scotland. You never seem to be able to get to the end of them. I could never trace them back to Scottish tunes, so they must have been in that district a good while. The Rosses people had very little connection with that area; it was foreign territory to us; when you travelled there, it was called 'going in through'. It was always a wild isolated area. For me, with its great fund of music, it was like discovering a whole new county.



Con Cassidy and  
John Doherty



# CON CASSIDY

## Jigs

### Con Cassidy's Jig

C.C.

Musical score for "Con Cassidy's Jig" in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second and fourth staves contain first and second endings, indicated by bracketed lines with "1" and "2" above them. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

### Untitled Jig

C.C.

Musical score for "Untitled Jig" in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second and fourth staves contain first and second endings, indicated by bracketed lines with "1" and "2" above them. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled Jig

C.C.

Musical score for 'Untitled Jig' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves. The first two staves are the main melody, and the last two staves are a variation. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 6/8. The melody is characterized by eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets and grace notes. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled Jig

C.C.

Musical score for 'Untitled Jig' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of six staves. The first five staves are the main melody, and the sixth staff is a variation. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 6/8. The melody is characterized by eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets and grace notes. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

# Reels

## Con Cassidy's Reel

C.C.

Musical score for 'Con Cassidy's Reel' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of six staves. The first staff contains the first four measures. The second staff contains measures 5-8, with first and second endings marked above the staff. The third and fourth staves contain measures 9-12, featuring sixteenth-note patterns. The fifth and sixth staves contain measures 13-16, ending with a double bar line and repeat sign.

## Kitty in the Lane

C.C.

Musical score for 'Kitty in the Lane' in D major, 2/4 time. The score consists of three staves. The first two staves contain measures 1-4. The third staff contains measures 5-8, with first and second endings marked above the staff.



# Untitled Reel



# Highlands and March

## Untitled Highland

C.C.

Musical score for 'Untitled Highland' in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). It features a melody with a repeat sign at the end. The second and third staves provide accompaniment with a steady eighth-note rhythm.

## Untitled Highland

C.C.

Musical score for 'Untitled Highland' in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). It features a melody with a repeat sign at the end. The second and third staves provide accompaniment with a steady eighth-note rhythm.

## Untitled Highland

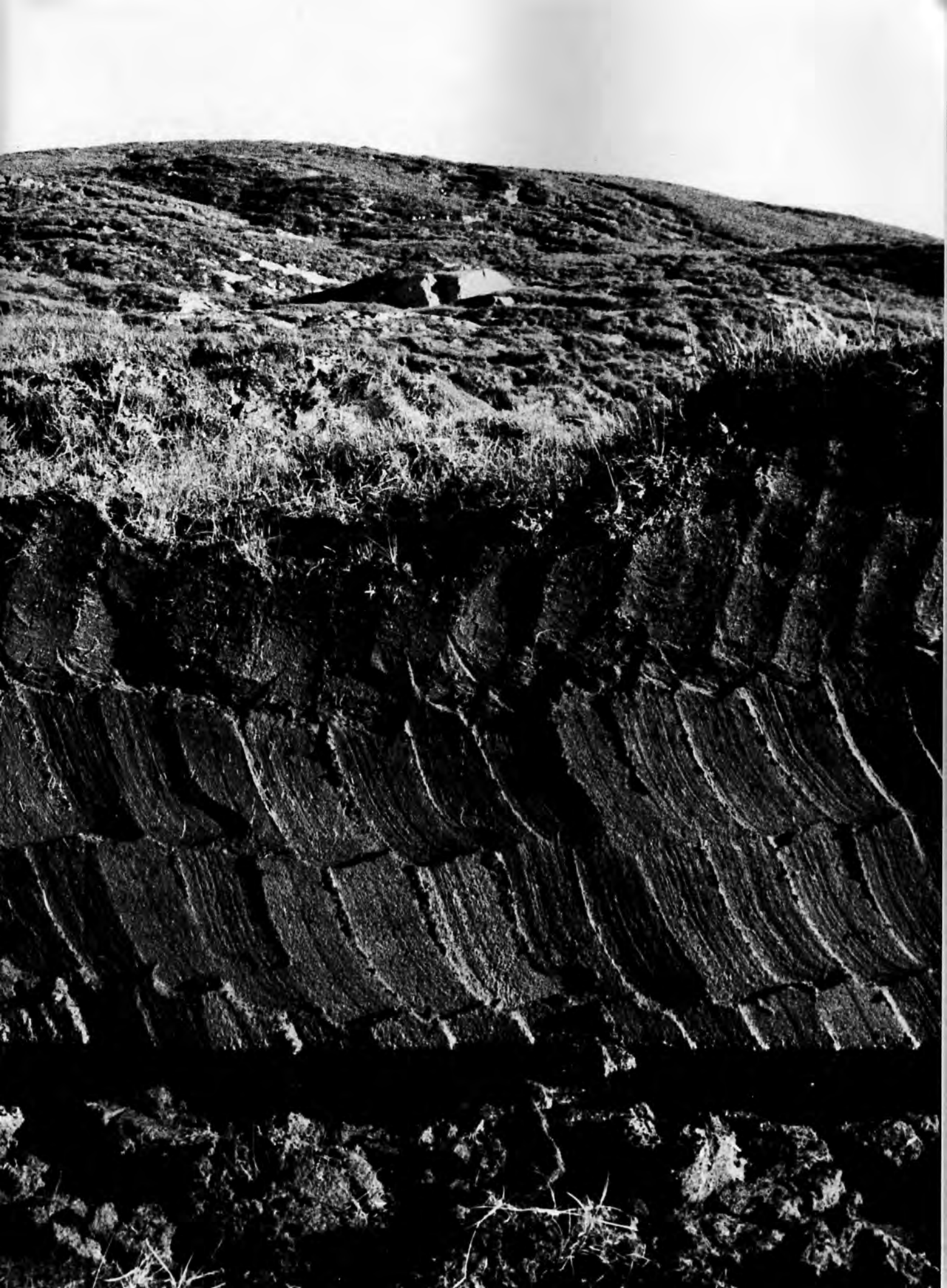
C.C.

Musical score for 'Untitled Highland' in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). It features a melody with a repeat sign at the end. The second and third staves provide accompaniment with a steady eighth-note rhythm. The score includes first and second endings, indicated by '1' and '2' above the staves.

# Brass Band March

C.C.

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of ten staves. The first staff is the main melody. The second staff is a rhythmic accompaniment. The third and fourth staves are more complex rhythmic patterns. The fifth and sixth staves are rhythmic accompaniments with some melodic elements. The seventh and eighth staves are rhythmic accompaniments. The ninth and tenth staves are rhythmic accompaniments. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, beams, and dynamic markings like 'f' and 'p'.





Carriek. Co Donegal March 75

W. J. O'Connell

# FRANCIE AND MICKEY BYRNE

## Double Jigs and Slip Jigs

### The Humours of Whiskey

F.&M.B.

Musical notation for 'The Humours of Whiskey'. The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

### The Ladies of Carrick

F.&M.B.

Musical notation for 'The Ladies of Carrick'. The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second and third staves continue the melody, with various ornaments and a final double bar line with repeat dots.

### Rory O'More

F.&M.B.

Musical notation for 'Rory O'More'. The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second and third staves continue the melody, featuring first and second endings (marked '1' and '2') and a final double bar line with repeat dots.

Untitled Double Jig

F.&M.B.

Musical score for 'Untitled Double Jig' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff is the treble clef melody, starting with a repeat sign and a down-bow or breath mark. The second staff is the bass clef accompaniment. The third staff is an alternative treble clef melody. The fourth staff is an alternative bass clef accompaniment, featuring first and second endings.

Untitled Slip Jig

F.&M.B.

Musical score for 'Untitled Slip Jig' in G major, 9/8 time. The score consists of two staves. The first staff is the treble clef melody, featuring a repeat sign and an accent mark. The second staff is the bass clef accompaniment.

Untitled Slip Jig

F.&M.B.

Musical score for 'Untitled Slip Jig' in G major, 9/8 time. The score consists of three staves. The first staff is the treble clef melody, featuring a repeat sign and an accent mark. The second staff is the bass clef accompaniment. The third staff is an alternative treble clef melody.

# Reels

## The Gravel Walks to Granie

F.&M.B.

The image shows a musical score for a reel titled "The Gravel Walks to Granie". The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of eight staves of music. The first four staves represent the first part of the reel, and the last four staves represent the second part. The music is characterized by a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet markings. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

*d.c. with 2nd fiddle one octave lower*



# Drowsy Maggie

F.&M.B.

Musical score for 'Drowsy Maggie' in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The score consists of five staves. The first four staves are in treble clef, and the fifth staff is in bass clef. The melody is characterized by a steady eighth-note rhythm with occasional accents. The bass line features a simple accompaniment with some triplet patterns. A bracketed section in the fifth staff shows a triplet of eighth notes.

# The Glory Reel

F.&M.B.

Musical score for 'The Glory Reel' in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves in treble clef. The melody is a lively reel with a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes. The accompaniment is more complex, featuring chords and moving lines. The final staff includes first and second endings, indicated by the numbers '1' and '2' above the notes.

# The Kiltyfanad Reel

F. & M. B.

1 *end*  
d.c.



# Mary O' the Wisp

F.&M.B.



Moll na Tiar na

F.&M.B.

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Moll na Tiar na' by F. & M. B. The score is written on ten staves. The first staff is in treble clef with a common time signature. The second staff is in bass clef. The third staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The fourth staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp. The fifth staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp. The sixth staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp. The seventh staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp. The eighth staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp. The ninth staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp. The tenth staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings. There are also first and second endings marked with '1' and '2' in the third staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a 'd.f.' marking.

# The Morning Dew

F.&M.B.

The musical score for 'The Morning Dew' is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The piece consists of ten staves of music. The first nine staves are the main melody, featuring various rhythmic patterns and ornaments such as grace notes and slurs. The tenth staff contains two boxed musical phrases: the first is a single note with a grace note, and the second is a four-measure phrase marked '2nd time' with an asterisk. The eleventh staff contains another boxed phrase marked '2nd time' with a plus sign. The score concludes with a double bar line.

On the Road

F.&M.B.

The musical score for 'On the Road' is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The piece begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The first measure contains a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature, followed by a double bar line and a repeat sign. The melody is primarily composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some quarter notes. There are several trills and grace notes throughout the piece. The score consists of ten staves. The first staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The second staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The third staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The fourth staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature, with first and second endings marked above the staff. The fifth staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The sixth staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The seventh staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The eighth staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The ninth staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The tenth staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature, with first and second endings marked above the staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

# Scotch Mary

F. & M. B.

Musical score for 'Scotch Mary' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of six staves of music. The first two staves are the melody, featuring eighth and sixteenth notes with accents. The last four staves are accompaniment, primarily consisting of eighth-note patterns with some sixteenth-note runs.

# Toss the Feathers

F. & M. B.

Musical score for 'Toss the Feathers' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of five staves of music. The first two staves are the melody, starting with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The last three staves are accompaniment, featuring eighth-note patterns and some sixteenth-note runs.

d. 5.

Untitled Reel

F.&M.B.

Musical score for 'Untitled Reel' (first instance). The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a fermata over the first note. The second and third staves contain melodic lines with various rhythmic patterns and accents. The fourth staff continues the melody with similar rhythmic patterns. The fifth and sixth staves feature more complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth notes and eighth notes, with some notes marked with a fermata.

Untitled Reel

F.&M.B.

Musical score for 'Untitled Reel' (second instance). The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a fermata over the first note. The second and third staves contain melodic lines with various rhythmic patterns and accents. The fourth staff continues the melody with similar rhythmic patterns.



Untitled Reel

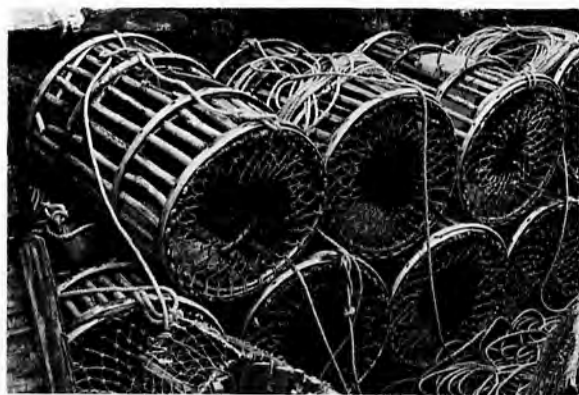
F.&M.B.

The musical score for 'Untitled Reel' is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of nine staves of music. The first eight staves are in treble clef, and the ninth staff is in bass clef. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Untitled Reel

F.&M.B.

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of eight staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a sharp sign, and a common time signature. The second staff includes first and second endings, indicated by the numbers '1' and '2' above the notes. The third staff starts with a repeat sign and a sharp sign. The fourth staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The fifth and sixth staves continue the melody with various rhythmic patterns. The seventh staff begins with a repeat sign. The eighth staff concludes with first and second endings, marked with '1' and '2'.



Untitled Reel

F.&M.B.

The musical score is written in D major (two sharps) and 2/4 time. It consists of eight staves of music. The first two staves feature a melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some grace notes. The third and fourth staves show a more rhythmic accompaniment with eighth-note patterns. The fifth and sixth staves continue the accompaniment with some rests and eighth-note figures. The seventh and eighth staves provide a final rhythmic accompaniment, ending with a whole note chord.

# King George IV Highland

F.&M.B.

Musical score for "King George IV Highland" in G major, common time. The score consists of four staves. The first two staves are treble clef, and the last two are bass clef. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and rests, characteristic of a Highland bagpipe tune. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The piece concludes with a double bar line.

# The Teelin Highland

F.&M.B.

Musical score for "The Teelin Highland" in G major, common time. The score consists of three staves. The first two staves are treble clef, and the last is bass clef. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and rests, characteristic of a Highland bagpipe tune. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Untitled Highland

F.&M.B.

Musical score for 'Untitled Highland' consisting of four staves. The first staff is a single melodic line in treble clef, key of D major (one sharp), and common time (C). The second staff is a single melodic line in treble clef, key of D major, and common time. The third and fourth staves are accompaniment lines in treble clef, key of D major, and common time, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

Untitled Highland

F.&M.B.

Musical score for 'Untitled Highland' consisting of three staves. The first staff is a single melodic line in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and common time (C). The second and third staves are accompaniment lines in treble clef, key of D major, and common time, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

# Marches and Mazurkas

## Brian Boru's March

F.&M.B.

Musical score for Brian Boru's March, featuring five staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The tempo is marked  $\text{♩} = 84$ . The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings (1, 2, 4, 5).

## Gallagher's March

F.&M.B.

Musical score for Gallagher's March, featuring four staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings.

# King William's Rambles

F. & M. B.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "King William's Rambles" by F. & M. B. The score is written in a single system with ten staves, all in treble clef and the key of D major (indicated by two sharps). The time signature is 2/4. The music consists of a series of rhythmic patterns, primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet markings. The score includes several repeat signs (double bar lines with dots) and first/second endings (marked with '1' and '2') at the end of the piece. The notation is clear and legible, with some slurs and accents used to indicate phrasing and dynamics.

King of the Pipers

F.&M.B.

Musical score for 'King of the Pipers' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of ten staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several repeat signs (double bar lines with dots) and first/second endings throughout the piece. The notation includes various ornaments and accents, such as a fermata over a note in the fourth staff and a trill in the seventh staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a final cadence.

Mazurka

F.&M.B.

Musical score for 'Mazurka' in G major, 3/4 time. The score consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The music is characterized by a strong, rhythmic melody with frequent eighth and sixteenth notes. There are repeat signs and first/second endings. The notation includes various ornaments and accents, such as a fermata over a note in the second staff and a trill in the third staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a final cadence.



# Pipe March

F. & M. B.

A

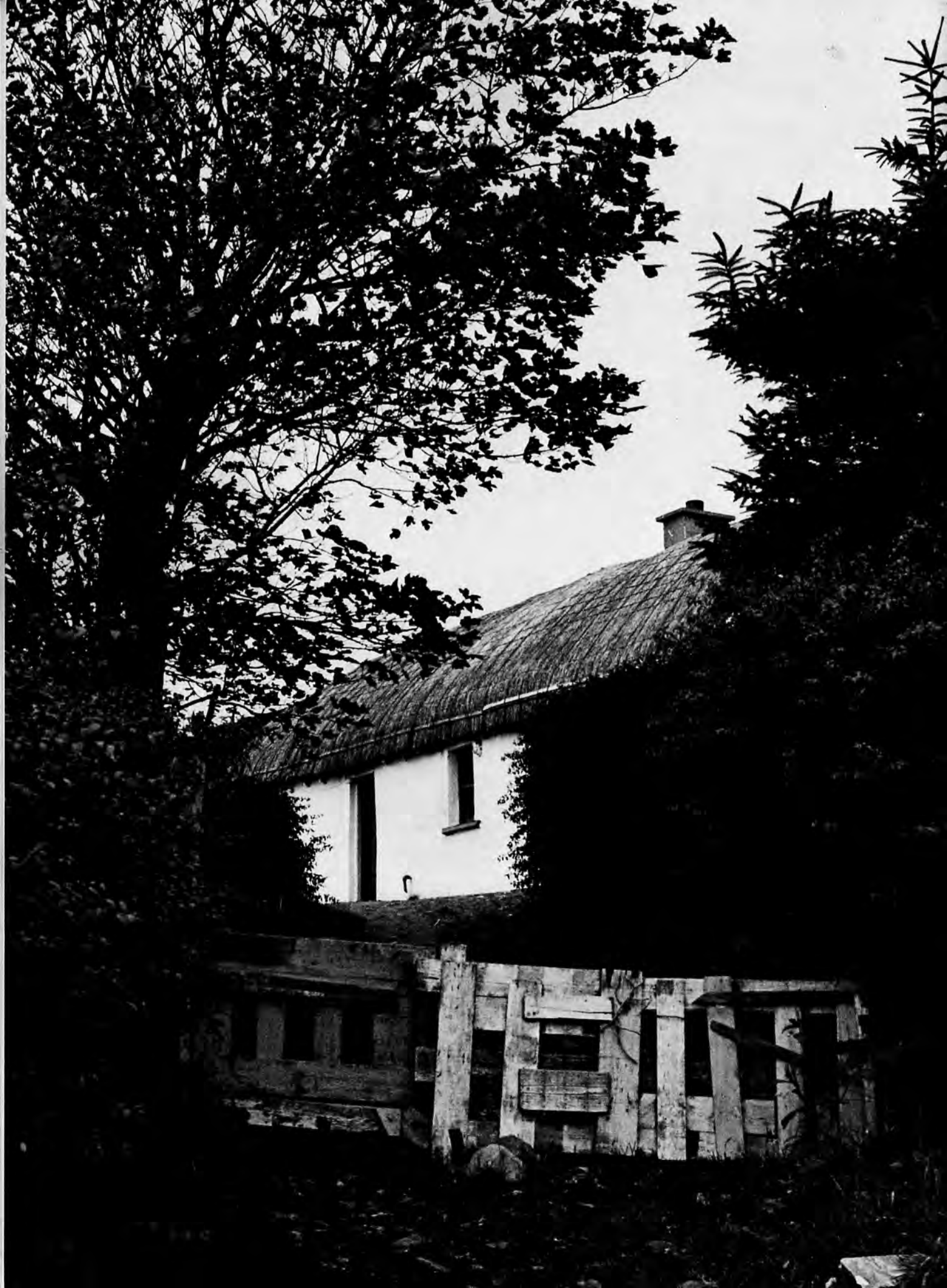
B

C

repeat B-A-B-C

[♩ = ♩ slightly sharp throughout]





# DANNY O'DONNELL

## Double Jigs and Slip Jigs

The Bargain is Over

D.O'D.

The musical score consists of six staves of music in treble clef, 6/8 time. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and bar lines. The piece concludes with a double bar line on the final staff.

Billy Rush's Jig

D.O'D.

Musical score for Billy Rush's Jig, D.O'D. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 6/8 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The first two staves form the first system, and the last two staves form the second system. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet markings. The first system ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The second system begins with a repeat sign and ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. There are two first endings (marked '1') and two second endings (marked '2') indicated by brackets and numbers above the notes.

Hardiman's Fancy

D.O'D.

Musical score for Hardiman's Fancy, D.O'D. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 6/8 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The first two staves form the first system, and the last two staves form the second system. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet markings. The first system ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The second system begins with a repeat sign and ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Merrily kissed the Quaker's Wife (1st version)

D.O'D.

Musical score for the first version of the tune. It consists of five staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The first staff begins with a repeat sign. The second staff contains first and second endings, marked with '1' and '2' and a repeat sign. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Merrily kissed the Quaker's Wife (2nd version)

D.O'D.

Musical score for the second version of the tune. It consists of three staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The first staff begins with a repeat sign. The second staff features a trill on the first measure. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The Milestone Jig (composed by Arthur Darley)

D.O'D.

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of 11 staves of music. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. There are several first and second endings indicated by the numbers '1' and '2' above the notes. The piece concludes with a final cadence on the eleventh staff.

# Piping Jig

D.O'D.

Musical score for Piping Jig, D.O'D. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 6/8 time signature. It consists of eight staves of music. The melody is characterized by a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together in groups. There are several repeat signs (double bar lines with dots) and trill ornaments (marked with a 't' and a flourish) throughout the piece. The piece concludes with a final double bar line.

# Untitled Slip Jig

D.O'D.

Musical score for Untitled Slip Jig, D.O'D. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 9/8 time signature. It consists of two staves of music. The melody is primarily composed of eighth notes, with some sixteenth notes. There are repeat signs at the end of both staves. The piece concludes with a final double bar line.



Untitled Slip Jig

D.O'D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Slip Jig' in G major (one sharp) and 9/8 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first two staves feature a melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some triplets. The last two staves provide a bass line with a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Untitled Double Jig

D.O'D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Double Jig' in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first two staves feature a melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some triplets. The last two staves provide a bass line with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. There are first and second endings marked with '1' and '2' above the notes in the second and fourth staves.

# Reels

## Flora McDonald's Reel

D.O.D.



Musical notation for Flora McDonald's Reel, consisting of two staves. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is common time (C). The melody is written in a single line on a treble clef staff. The first staff contains the first two measures, and the second staff contains the next two measures, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

## John McNeil's Reel

D.O'D.



Musical notation for John McNeil's Reel, consisting of four staves. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is common time (C). The melody is written in a single line on a treble clef staff. The first three staves contain the main melody, and the fourth staff contains a variation with two first endings marked '1' and '2'.

Margaret Stuart's Reel

D.O'D.

Musical notation for Margaret Stuart's Reel, consisting of three staves. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is common time (C). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody is written in a single line. A first ending bracket is placed over the final two measures of the first staff, with a '1' above it. The second and third staves continue the melody. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Sally Kelly's Reel

D.O'D.

Musical notation for Sally Kelly's Reel, consisting of three staves. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is common time (C). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second and third staves continue the melody. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled Reel

D.O'D.

Musical notation for an Untitled Reel, consisting of four staves. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is common time (C). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second, third, and fourth staves continue the melody. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled Reel

D.O'D.

The image shows a musical score for a reel, consisting of four staves of music. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The notation includes various rhythmic patterns such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.





# Highlands, Strathspeys and Hornpipes

## Neilie Boyle's Highland

D.O'D.



Musical notation for Neilie Boyle's Highland, consisting of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and common time. The melody is written in a single voice on a treble clef staff. The first staff contains the first four measures, the second staff the next four, the third staff the next four, and the fourth staff the final four measures, ending with a double bar line.

*This tune is repeated an octave lower*

## Neil Gow's Strathspey

D.O'D.



Musical notation for Neil Gow's Strathspey, consisting of two staves of music in D minor (two flats) and common time. The melody is written in a single voice on a treble clef staff. The first staff contains the first four measures, and the second staff contains the next four measures. The final two measures of the second staff feature first and second endings, indicated by bracketed lines with '1' and '2' above them.

Untitled Strathspey

D.O'D.

The first Strathspey piece is written in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains the melody, which begins with a quarter rest followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second and third staves provide accompaniment, primarily using eighth and sixteenth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled Strathspey

D.O'D.

The second Strathspey piece is in G major and 2/4 time, spanning three staves. The melody in the first staff features a prominent triplet of eighth notes in the final measure, marked with a '2' above the staff. The accompaniment in the second and third staves uses eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing beamed eighth notes. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled Strathspey

D.O'D.

The third Strathspey piece is in A major (two sharps) and 2/4 time, consisting of three staves. The melody in the first staff starts with a quarter rest and is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second and third staves provide accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled Strathspey

D.O'D.





### Untitled Strathspey

D.O'D.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Strathspey' in C major, 2/4 time. The piece consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The second and third staves continue the melody. The third staff includes a first ending bracket with a '1' and a second ending bracket with a '2'. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots. The initials 'D.C.' are written below the third staff.

### The Broken Bridge Hornpipe

D.O'D.

Musical notation for 'The Broken Bridge Hornpipe' in D major, 2/4 time. The piece consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The second and third staves continue the melody. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

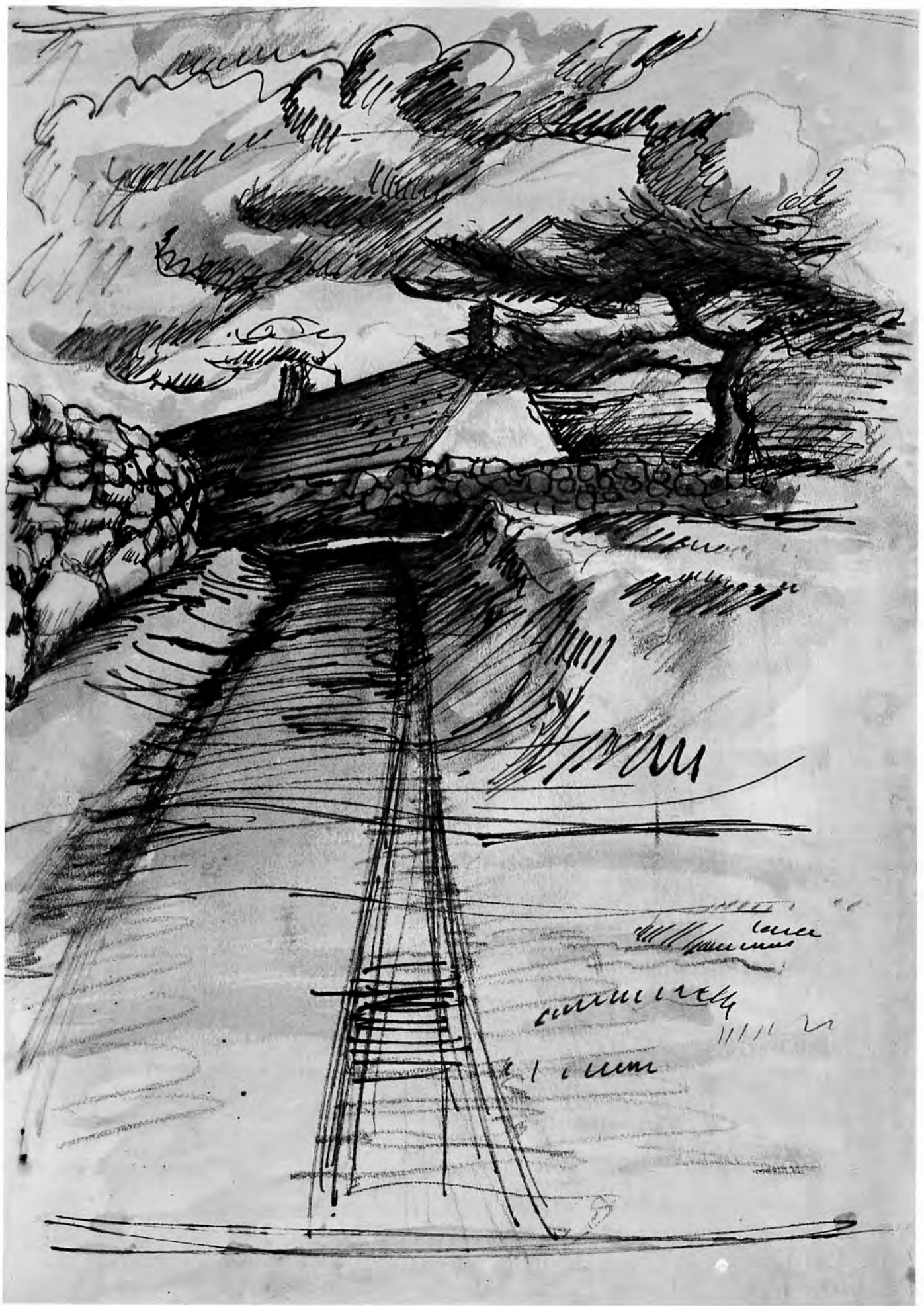
### Dr Peter's Hornpipe

D.O'D.

Musical notation for 'Dr Peter's Hornpipe' in D major, 2/4 time. The piece consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The second and third staves continue the melody. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).



"Nancy's" - McHugh's Bar Ardara 1790000



# TYRONE BARN DANCE

— 1 —

'It was held in an empty house where a post stood in one part of the floor to support the roof, round this the dancers used to turn when doing the Hey or the Figure Eight and the post helped them "keep a good line". The musician of these dances was Mickey McRory ... Mr Andy McDowell who remembers him well described him to me. He wore a blue cloth cut away coat with brass buttons and grey homespun woollen stockings. He had a good tune that he made up himself. It was called "The Hounds and the Hare". It began with an old reel and then you hear the horses trotting and the growl of hounds, after that he'd give a shout "Ho she's away!" and the hounds would be in full cry and the music would go helter-skelter to the end.'

Rose Shaw, *Carleton's Country*, 1930, p.109.

Rose Shaw's description of a country barn dance and of a piece of chase music bearing a similar name and description to one of the classic items of music in the Doherty family repertoire, suggests a strong continuity between the music and dance tradition of Donegal and Southern Tyrone. We will never be able to ascertain how strong a connection there was. Rose Shaw's description is an account related to her of a Tyrone fiddler who played at the turn of the century and who wore the costume usually associated with travelling pipers of the 1800s. In the decades since Rose Shaw wrote her book the historical pattern that fragmented the Donegal fiddling tradition had an even more destructive effect on indigenous musical elements in County Tyrone. There are possibly as many fiddlers in Tyrone today as in Donegal, yet very few of these men play in the local style or possess a localised repertoire. The vast majority of Tyrone fiddlers who are currently active possess a repertoire and play in a style that is derived from the recorded fiddling of the Sligo artist Michael Coleman and from the ceildh bands which have been popular there since the 1940s. When Coleman's music, via 78 r.p.m. recordings, filtered into the county there was a change in fiddling style and repertoire. In our interviews with Tyrone fiddlers we were informed that there were two levels of response to Coleman's recordings. Some fiddlers turned to them as a source for new tunes, while many others played and replayed these records until they could imitate Coleman's playing note for note. Such was the combined power of Coleman's virtuosity and of the new technology of recording on the isolated musical culture of Tyrone.



The introduction of recorded fiddling was not the sole cause of the passing of the local Tyrone styles and tunes. Tyrone in the last thirty years has undergone the same process of modernisation and integration into a market economy that has affected most of rural Ireland during this period. One instance of this was the change from subsistence farming to cattle raising as the main economic activity in many parts of rural Tyrone. Within the old subsistence economy, farming communities were afforded greater leisure time, especially in the winter, the period of the year when country house dances were most numerous. It was also during this period that co-operative agricultural activities such as flax pulling declined, eliminating the ritual occasions for holding dances. Traditional fiddling has survived in Tyrone only because many musicians turned to the technically complex and commercially legitimised Sligo style of music. In comparison to Donegal there is very little left of the historically indigenous fiddling tradition. The reasons for the greater vulnerability of the Tyrone tradition in comparison to that of Donegal are worth examining. As stated in a previous chapter, much of the responsibility for the maintenance and continuity of the fiddling tradition in Donegal lay in the hands of professionalised families of travelling musicians. Tyrone lacked such a subculture of resident travelling musicians who would have been capable of maintaining cultural continuity and who would have been in a position to link up the various localised schools of fiddling through cross-fertilisation of their repertoire. In Southern Tyrone, though there was a recollection of visits paid by travelling musicians, this was not a common occurrence, and their music seemed to have had little influence on the local fiddlers.

The travelling musicians in Donegal maintained an extremely high standard of virtuosity and combined this with a wide and varied repertoire. There were characteristics that were also shared by the sedentary players. Because of their mobility and almost full time commitment to music the travelling musicians were exposed to diverse musical influences. In addition, significant sections of the population of Donegal were accustomed to travelling to Scotland and absorbing the traditional styles to be found there. The result of these patterns was that, though geographically remote, South-west Donegal had historically been open to foreign and diverse musical influences and had learned how to integrate different musical elements into the already established traditions. When Coleman's music was introduced into a region like South-west Donegal it was appreciated for its technical brilliance and the new tunes it offered, but it did not overwhelm the local styles. There already existed in South-west Donegal a highly self-conscious school of fiddling different from the Sligo style, but no less technically complex.

Though geographically more accessible than Donegal, the local traditions in Tyrone were most separated and inward looking and historically underwent less exposure to external musical influences. Though there was a Scottish element present in Tyrone fiddling, also due to migratory labour practices, and the highland was a popular dance, there was not the same proliferation of Scottish tunes and development of Scottish stylistic characteristics as in Donegal. We encountered only a small repertoire of commonly known highlands in Tyrone in comparison to a very large repertoire of highlands played in Donegal.

The fiddlers of one district in Tyrone would have very little contact with the fiddlers of an adjacent district. When a local virtuoso appeared, his actual musical influence rarely extended beyond his immediate district. There were no travelling professional musicians to transmit his tunes or his playing style from one district to another, as in Donegal. Traditionally insulated from other styles of fiddling, it is no surprise that the recordings of Coleman had such a marked effect on local Tyrone fiddlers. For the

majority the hearing of a Coleman recording would have been the first occasion on which they had heard fiddling from outside their immediate environment. Coleman's playing opened up an entirely new range of technical orientations and tunes for these fiddlers and may have been associated with the trend towards modernisation that was developing in rural society. For why else would fiddlers, in adopting his style, completely reject out of hand the entire local repertoire and playing characteristics of their district?

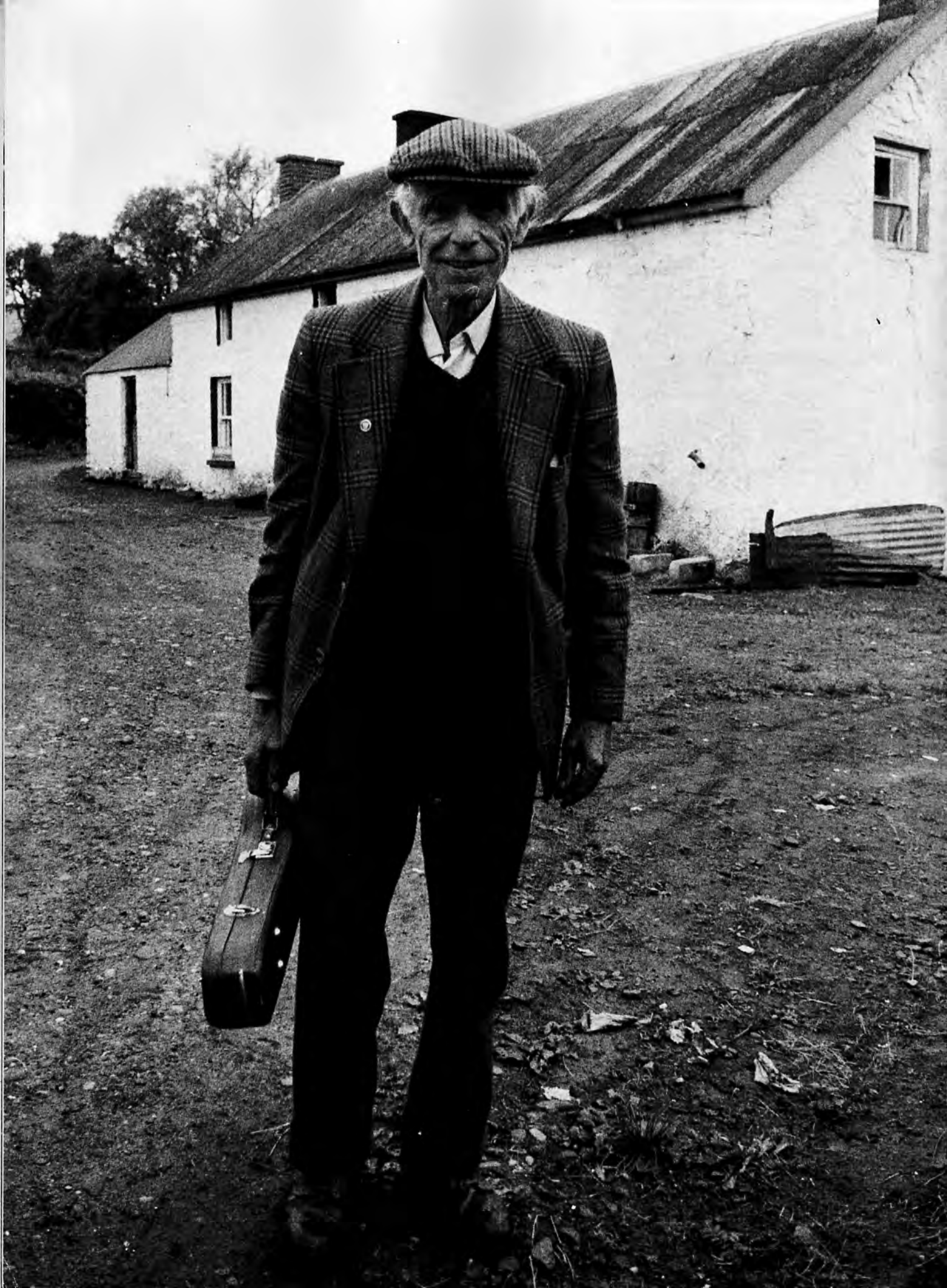
Despite the inward orientation of the Tyrone tradition judging from the few fiddlers playing in the local manner, the tradition was rich in unusual tunes, and regularly produced master fiddlers. In Southern Tyrone one of the most famous of the virtuoso fiddlers was Master McDermott, a local school teacher from Carrickmore. McDermott was able to read and write music and accumulated manuscripts of tunes he had collected from other fiddlers in his district. He was a frequent player at local dances and it was a common practice for him to take aside an individual fiddler and give him advice concerning his fiddling. Many aspiring fiddlers in the district visited McDermott to receive tuition on the fiddle. Without doubt McDermott raised the level of technical expertise in his district, as well as enlarging the local repertoire, for in addition to collecting tunes, he also composed a number of reels that became standards among the local fiddlers. John McKeown of Cappagh, a man of few words and much music, is one of the few remaining fiddlers taught by McDermott. His fiddling, influenced by McDermott's teaching, is light and quick, utilizing a long bow style and delicate harmonies reminiscent of Kerry fiddling.



John McKeown







Though McDermott assumed an almost legendary status among the fiddlers in Southern Tyrone, his actual musical influence was basically limited to the Carrickmore area. Peter Turbit of Ballygawley, some ten to fifteen miles from Carrickmore, was a musical contemporary of McDermott who had heard him play on only a few occasions. McDermott's school of fiddling had almost no influence on the music in Ballygawley. There the leading fiddler was Peter Turbit's uncle Ned Turbit, a notorious fiddler who was given to rambling away from home for weeks at a time playing for dancers. It was from his uncle that Peter Turbit learned most of his tunes.

Peter Turbit denies inheriting any of his uncle's inclinations towards wandering, but the first night we set out to locate him we spent five hours driving from house to house missing him by thirty minutes each time. While we scoured the back roads of Ballygawley, Peter, in his early seventies, criss-crossed the hills, taking his usual shortcuts on his weekly round of visiting and chat with kin and neighbours. At about 1.00 a.m., when we had yet to make an appearance at his home, we gave up the search. The next day we drove back to the house and found Peter standing in the shadow of his doorway, fiddle case tucked under his arm. He informed us in his dry laconic way that he was ready to go with us, though we had yet to introduce ourselves, or even explain our mission. Of all the fiddlers we encountered Peter Turbit possessed one of the most archaic sounds. It is a mannered, stately fiddling where reels and jigs are played at half the tempo normally associated with Irish music. His bowing is extremely rhythmic and heavily accentuated; he is an expert at utilizing double stops and modal drones to fill out a tune. Adding these characteristics to the fact that in Turbit's youth fiddlers employed gut strings (which have a deeper, softer tone than the currently favoured steel) and tuned their fiddles well below concert pitch, one can imagine an unusual sound to the Ballygawley fiddling. In Southern Tyrone the ornamentations utilized on the fiddle were mostly rhythmic and not melodic. The lowered pitch was employed in the belief that it made the fiddle louder. Within this style every aspect of the fiddler's playing was devoted to creating the appropriate rhythmic syncopation for the dancers. In listening to Turbit's fiddling one cannot help feeling that one is listening to Irish fiddling at one of its earliest stages of development. The insularity of the tradition in the Ballygawley area may be one of the reasons that this archaic style can still be heard, but there may be another factor beyond this one. In Tyrone the fiddle was not only the dominant instrument used for the dances, but until the advent of the melodeon in the 1920s and 1930s, it was the only instrument used for dances. Though the neighbouring county of Fermanagh possessed a strong flute playing tradition, the flute seems not to have penetrated into Tyrone. So unlike counties such as Donegal where the Highland pipes were played and Sligo where there was a strong practice of flute playing, the Tyrone fiddler had no other instrumental referents for his music than the violin — the instrument he played himself. In many regions of Ireland where the fiddle was a relative late comer in comparison to the wind instruments, fiddlers would often adopt their repertoire and playing styles from these instruments. As far as we can tell this did not happen in Tyrone. The closest comparisons to Turbit's playing would be the equally antique playing styles to be found in the Shetland Islands and in the Appalachian mountain region of the Southern United States. Both these regions share common characteristics with Turbit's style: that of heavily rhythmic bowing and dependence on modal drones to fill out the melodic structure of a tune.



Peter Turbitt in Paddy McInnes's house.

OCALMS '77

## Conversation with Peter Turbit

- A.F. How did you get on to the fiddle, Peter?
- P.T. Sitting and listening to the rest of them. That's how I got onto the music. I kept it up over the years there, listening to people playing and I could lift up tunes there and I could mind them in my head fairly well. With minor alterations I'd nearly have them all; I could play the most of them the next day.
- A.F. Did you pick up most of your tunes at the dances?
- P.T. I picked up most of them at home from my brothers and my uncle, Ned Turbit.
- A.F. Were there many fiddlers coming to your house?
- P.T. Oh, there was surely. Then there was plenty of fiddlers in the country that time but they're all dead now. Ned Turbit came to live nearly beside me and he be down regular and he was a great old fiddler altogether.
- A.F. What kind of man was he?
- P.T. He was an old farmer — worked on the farm and done the most of it with spade and scythe. That's what started me off for he was the best fiddler I knowed at the time.
- A.F. Where did he pick up his music?
- P.T. Well, that's what I don't know, because he was an old man and near pension age when I'd seen him. Well, he played away till he died. I heard stories that he was around the country and was away playing weeks at a time, and they didn't know where he went.
- A.F. Did you do that yourself?
- P.T. Generally speaking I'd never bother too much about it. Now if I got in with three or four [fiddlers] I'd enjoy a bit of music.
- A.F. Those tunes you play like 'Errigal Braes' and 'Turniskea Lasses' — I never heard them played by anyone else now.
- P.T. They're old tunes — Ned Turbit played them.
- A.F. What age were you when you started playing for dances?
- P.T. I was playing for dances when I was ten years old. I think if I had waited till I was seventeen and had a mad craze for music I'd be a far better player than I am. A man of seventeen gets a mad craze for music and he'd definitely flourish, he'll bog into it and he'll improve.

A.F. Do you think you came too early to the music?

P.T. I did.

A.F. ... and did you get bored with it?

P.T. ... a wee bit ... there used to come people to the house to hear me when I was small playing in my own way, and I used to go outside altogether; I wouldn't come into the house at all.

A.F. At what time during the year were the dances held?

P.T. Most of the dancing was in the winter-time. Along in the summer then there'd be flax pullings and dances were given then. They would gather up the neighbours to pull the flax. They would have a dance when it was all pulled and steeped in the dams.

A.F. How was that done?

P.T. They steeped the flax after they pulled it and tied it in bunches. They would build a dam six to eight feet square and take water from the river and they would put big staves and flags to keep the flax down. It would be in the dam of water for a week to ten days. Then it would sour in the water and give off a smell. Then a couple of men would pull up their trousers and get in the water as they threw it out of the brew. The water would get deeper and deeper and eventually they would have to take off their trousers altogether. It was very rough work; the beats that they called the sheaves when they be wet and steeped like that, they be a brave weight. The women would spread the flax. They'd let it drip on the side of the dam for a day or two, then they carted it with a horse and cart; they threw the beats out of it by threes and fours and then you would spread it up on a lee field, from the head of the field to the foot of it. After they would be taken to the mill where they scutched the seed off the fibre.

A.F. Who were some of the other good fiddlers in this area?

P.T. Well, the good fiddler I knew in this area besides Ned Turbit was Patrick Campbell, he played by note and Ned Turbit, he played by ear, but they were both good fiddlers — two different styles.

A.F. Did you hear much of Master McDermott?

P.T. Oh, I heard him three or four times: he played by note too. He kept a terrible good fiddle. He could drown out all the other fiddles, and then I hear them saying if he was out for a night's fiddling he'd spend the whole day tuning the fiddle. She was a great fiddle you know.

A.F. Were there many good fiddlers in this part of the country?

P.T. There was a right lock of fiddlers. But as the man says there were more fiddlers than fiddle players if you know what I mean. There were about a dozen men trying to play the fiddle but in my opinion they could play none.

Peter Turbit in  
Mrs Toal's guest  
house,  
Carrickmore



Peter Timbitt - Guesthouse Aug 77

a John 5/77

Turbit's casual attitude towards his own music is rooted in his association of fiddling with country house dancing. Until recent years he had perceived fiddling as a social activity; an extension of the dances. When the dancing faded Peter put away his fiddle. It has only been recently that he has taken it up again. Because of this his music has changed little. He plays the same tunes and in the same style as he did fifty years ago. Because it lay dormant his music is unchanged. The man who was responsible for convincing Peter Turbit and John McKeown as well as many others to play the fiddle after years of inactivity is John Loughran. Peter Turbit and John McKeown are just two of many older fiddlers that John Loughran has returned to the tradition. In the Fifties and early Sixties Loughran started to pay regular visits to fiddlers who had once been active in the country house dance scene, urging them to start playing again. If it were not for his intervention the tradition in that part of the country would have vanished completely. What is remarkable about Loughran's achievement is that he initiated a small revival without recourse to the media, competitions, festivals and the rest of the strategies common to folk revivals. He simply re-established personal contact with the fiddlers and provided them with the personal support and artistic reinforcement they needed in order to return to a practice that suffered from aesthetic isolation and social indifference. Loughran reconnected these fiddlers to their own peer culture. He made them aware that they belonged to a special grouping within their own society and that the knowledge and skills they had acquired were of positive value. Our own journey to Tyrone merely reiterated a point that Loughran had constantly reminded these men of for many years.

During our journey in Tyrone John Loughran was our guide, despite the fact that he is blind. He was hit by a stone when he was ten years old and lost the sight in one eye, while the other was severely damaged and decreased in strength over the years. While in a local hospital he began to learn the fiddle, propping up his elbow on the pillow. Today one can still see him from time to time holding his fiddle in this peculiar position. His own father, a noted fiddler, had died before Loughran himself showed an interest in fiddling. John Loughran learned the fiddle in the last days of the country house dancing and immersed himself totally in the music and atmosphere of the all night dances. Perhaps because he knew he faced eventual blindness, he developed a keen internal memory of the sights and sounds of those dances. He has a special capacity in his conversation to evoke in the most vivid manner the milieu of the country house dance and the personalities involved. Loughran's memory was one of the most startling phenomena we encountered on the trip. Now all but totally blind, he guided our van down obscure back roads in search of fiddlers. He knew every turning and every house in that country. We were hopelessly lost in this maze but not John: he could identify a turn off just as we approached it though he could not see it. Once he asked us to look out for a thatched cottage with a white sheep dog standing in front. Sure enough we drove up to the place exactly as described with the dog sitting by the gate as if expecting us. As we drove Loughran kept a continual stream of songs and lilts, and commentary on specific fiddlers' playing. With each fiddler he introduced us to he would stir their memory with the incantation, 'What's old to you is new to them boys.'

House in the  
Croaghs

As well as mastering the labyrinth of back roads in Southern Tyrone, Loughran has more importantly mastered the labyrinth of memories, stories and associations rooted in the folk culture of that region. The interview he gave us is a *tour de force* of folk memory. He produced one story after the other in much the same manner as he produces tunes, and like his fiddling the repertoire is endless. Of relevance is his account of the reunion of two old farmers at a country dance, for in that account lies one of the important truths of the dance and music tradition of rural Ireland. It shows that the gathering of friends and neighbours into a farmhouse kitchen for a night of fiddling and dancing was more than just an entertainment and a diversion during the long nights of winter. When the two old men danced together on that kitchen floor their entire lives danced with them. The country house dance with its music and 'crack' was ultimately a celebration of a life style and a metaphor for communal experience.







## Conversation with John Loughran, Natalie Joynt and John Loughran's Mother

- J.L. Oh, welcome, welcome, welcome every one,  
For the night of the wedding, the night of the fun,  
The doctor was sent for, she had a young son,  
She done it before, she'll do it again,  
The women can do it far better than men,  
[Lilts on]  
And then they'd go into a bit of a lilt after that they'd go into that sort of a thing after it ye know. Ay, and then maybe they'd come in on another bar of it again, some other saying again. That's the way they went on now. Oh, I mind a woman round here, and she had a whole tear of that, a whole list of it ... they're all dead and tossed away. I have it always on the tip of my tongue whenever anybody like you comes round, that this thing all happened fifty or so years too late. Well there's a lot of it collected and caught up with right enough. If there hadn't a been somebody come out it would have been all lost, but there's heaps of it away. I'm only talking from a certain length back like, but way back then there was far more time for music that what's in it now ye know. You go into play music now in some house as I have done different nights here lately, and a colour television going in the corner. Jesus, what reels or jigs are you going to play with them boys doing something funny on thon thing? Ye can't play, don't youse tell me boys, you'll play no music, don't tell me yez can play, ye couldn't play and looking into thon boy in the corner. It doesn't annoy me for I don't see what's going on. Ach, its changed and it's all different altogether. No, it's not the tunes nor the playing, the whole thing as a whole ... it's like the world yez are living in boys. It's just a whole complete change.
- A.F. Why do you think the people changed John? Why do you think they listen to this different music now?
- J.L. Och, it's a different thing has come in boys. Sure you needn't say to me, 'Why, John?' Don't youse know, and yez are better educated than I, what has come in like for to change the world so much. I'm only talking from ordinary rough way like...

- A.F. It seems sad that people lost the music, it was a good thing. Why would they let it go so easily, and so fast?
- J.L. Och no, the music was great thing in a way but if the other stuff comes in, ye know, it's like somebody coming over from England the day on holidays and have some rattley thing in the box over in Donegal from some big shop in London and we never seen it before, he starts to rattle it and Jaysus everybody is trying to catch it, Jesus show me that till I shake that, ye know. He could make a great go of it — he got it in some shop in London, and because we didn't know where it come from.
- A.F. How did you learn how to play the fiddle yourself John?
- J.L. Ah, just scraping myself. Sure I'm still learning.
- A.F. Well, how did you start?
- J.L. Scraping about here from one house to the other.
- A.F. Were you taught by your father?
- J.L. Oh no, I didn't play in his time at all.
- A.F. You didn't play in his time?
- J.L. No, his fiddle hung up there where that clock is there in that corner. No, at that time the old people wouldn't let any young people lift a fiddle or lift a bow off the wall because we might break it. They always hung a fiddle on the wall whatever was the reason. No fiddles went into cases.
- A.F. Well how long have you been playing for now, how many years?
- J.L. A great many years. I've been playing since 1942.
- A.F. What age were you then?
- J.L. Ach, I wouldn't know what age I was. Oh, but the fiddle was too big for me. I tell you what I put her out there on my shoulder, I put her out past my shoulder. I thought that corner on her there was for holding your chin in there and make a yoke of her there. I thought that was for sitting in the side of your neck...  
... The fiddles were tuned below concert pitch.
- A.F. Really, they'd play it low then? How low would they play?
- J.L. A fiddle nearly was louder when she was below concert pitch than when she was at concert pitch. You had a lovely mellow tone flowing off her ye know, like a thingamajig like a...
- A.F. Like a viola.
- J.L. Ay, that type, lovely deep tone, ye know.
- N.J. Gut or steel strings?

John Loughran at  
the Aghgarin  
Fleadh Cheoil

J.L. No gut, mostly gut. The steel string only came in later on in my time. The old men would boil them and dry them out again. Och ay, the old men'd put them on...

N.J. Did they make them?

J.L. No, they bought them. The gut string came in a big length, ye know, and these strings, there might be five strings in the one piece and they cut them to fit the string themselves, and they boiled it and then dried them out and that took the stretch that would be moving always in a new gut string when you put them on, the stretch was away, ay. They never had to be tuned and tuned. The tension came on it and stayed there,. Oh ay, a gut string was a nice string to play on. Ay, a gut string. Oh sure, men wouldn't put a steel on it for fear it would pull asunder. Ye know, they never was made for steel string. Oh, it had to be gut your tie back here... That time they would take a lump of rosin off a bush. There was no money to buy rosin or anything ye know. It would be the size of a half brick nearly and usually a lot of men would fill their own bow as well. Tear a hair off a colt's tail there, a foal, what they'd call a colt here, they'd take a copin out of it there and whatever stayed in stayed, and whatever went out fell out, and kept whatever got tight in her. They put in a fistful, like, on it, brushed away and combed away till they had what done to fill their bow. But it'd take an awful lot of rosin for that ye see, because it never was bleached or cleaned, be all greasy, and ye put on a awful lot of rosin, [on the bow hair].



I heard them telling someone about a boy, and I suppose I don't know whether it was Wellingtons that he was wearing or some sort of ould rubber boot or something. He was playing at this fire in the country kitchen. That time ye'd be took down to the room, a fiddler was made a wee bit special than the rest ye know. And he was asked down ye see, but ... Whatever way he rosined away at this bow the whole night, there was a shower of rosin about his feet, like white snow with this big lump of rosin away at this pony's tail that was in the bow. He got up anyway and he headed away for the kitchen do you see, and I suppose it was a right bit of a swanky place and a wee bit of difference be other places, the room a wee bit of carpet and he sat down at the table to take his bacon, meat or whatever he was getting. The music men would get it before the rest, special, ye see. Maybe the rest would get it a wee bit rougher, the music men would always get it a wee bit special. And dammit anyway, whatever way his ould' rosin was sticking on his feet, he went to move do ye see, for to get away from the table and the mat that he was on, or bit of carpet or whatever the hell it was on, it came along with him. And he rose and he went out through the door and he had this bit of carpet away after him and away on up by the fire again it was stuck to the two Wellingtons or the two rubber shoes. Away on up with him do you see, away up in by the fire. They tell an awful story about it ... a wee while after he was playing away and this started burning, hot by the red coals ye see. Nobody ever mentioned it to him that it was stuck to his feet... He took it out of the room with him, and was away on up by the fire and he started to play, ye know where his chair was again, this started singeing and burning then and it was stuck in the ashes, in the fire. But whether it ever happened or not ... I have never rosined that much that I'd be stuck to the floor with rosin anyway... Ach, there was some wonderful pieces. Sure, ye could go on and talk like that for to me again... This is me now and I could go on.

A.F. Where did your father learn his music?

J.L. Oh well now, he was a terrible good fiddler called Willie Corrigan but he never talked much to me for I was younger here... And Willie Corrigan was the foundation of all the other players that's out beside Cappagh and McKeown's country. Oh, John McKeown could have talked about Willie Corrigan. Big Paddy Nugent talked about Willie Corrigan. But Paddy told a story about Willie Corrigan. Willie Corrigan was a great fiddle player. The talk of the country and if anything was going or any Yankees home or going away, Willie Corrigan was sent for, there was no other fiddler like Willie Corrigan. But there came a tramp boy round the country one time and he come and he was looking for to stop over night and one thing and another. And he came into Corrigan's — Corrigan was living on his lone — and he came into Corrigan's and he talked to Corrigan and he got a bowl of tea or whatever and a bit of bread or whatever he had from Corrigan. And he asked could he get staying for a lock of days, that his feet were sore walking the roads, and could get staying a while. Corrigan says, 'I haven't much for ye to do now at this time of year.' But he says, 'Sure, if ye want to do wee bits of jobs I'll keep ye for a week or a fortnight anyway.' Well, the man says, 'That'll be grand, even if it was only scuffling round the sweep or some wee job just that I'd rest myself that I'd be out on the road again.' Well, Corrigan says, 'All right, you're welcome to stay.' So every night when Corrigan would come in at bedtime after doing bits of things around the house, he'd come in and take down his fiddle off the wall. And there was sort of a cuilce bed that was built in the wall for lying in there. I suppose some people would lie in and keep on the fire all night and be up

early in the morning. But anyway this boy got this bed and Willie, ay, Willie was up in the room lying, it was a room and a kitchen just. And this boy'd be lying in the ould cuilce resting himself and listening to Willie playing away at the fiddle every night. And about a week after he was playing away, this boy was in the bed lying, maybe smoking a pipe or something or listening to him. Anyway, he says to Willie, 'Willie,' he says, 'you're playing that tune wrong.' Jesus, Corrigan was offended. 'What do ye say?' 'I say Willie, you're playing that tune wrong, and another thing, I don't think ye have that fiddle tuned.' 'Well, tune her you,' says he and he fired her into the bed and he nearly took the head off him with it. Like, telling Willie Corrigan that he hadn't the fiddle tuned that was the top man in that country, nor wasn't playing the tune right. 'Well, here you,' says he, and he fired her into the bed to him across the kitchen. And the boy lifted the fiddle, and he started to tune her up and Corrigan started listening. And the boy drew her under his chin, he sitting himself up in the bed. 'I think this is the tune here Willie,' says he, 'you're at,' and he started to go over the tune. And Corrigan made across the floor at him and says he, 'And you there this week, and Jesus, listening to me scraping the fiddle. I'll never catch a fiddle again in my life — And you're playing a tune like that now that I'm trying to learn all week.' 'Well,' says he, 'I just wanted to tell you Will, for fear you'd be another week at it.'

A.F. Well, when you started playing were the dances still going?

J.L. Oh, ay. Oh Jesus, don't talk about dances.

A.F. What were they like!

J.L. I played at dances. Chrissakes, another fellow and me there were just talking about that the other night. I had the 'flu here and went off to see him way off up in the mountains and we were talking about things we had done, me and him on two bicycles with two old fiddles tied on our backs with a rope. Coming in every morning you'd be meeting the milkman and postman. We met the postman every morning, coming in at daylight.

A.F. What did you do up at those dances there? What were they like those dances?

J.L. Just the old country dance, you know, in barns, it might be houses. Then in that time you see if there was one running the party the night, or a wee bit of a country dance, well it'd be sure that there'd be another house maybe up the road a lock of hundred yards, or maybe a hundred yards the morrow night. They would say, 'You can come to our house the morrow night.' It wasn't to say there was anybody home from America or that it was a very big do, you know. But the other thing was only a sort of a ceilidh. If there was a house with three girls in it, well it only took three more to make a dance. There were always boys coming in, they might be on their ceilidh for a night's crack like. They didn't care whether they danced or not, if the women were about there was dance, gathered up you see. This is the way it would go. Well, in the end if that went on in this house the night, well if me and Coyle was in this, it was Coyle that called up, 'Well, you'd make sure you'll come out tomorrow night.' Well, if there was six or ten in this house the night, there might be twenty in the other house tomorrow night.

A.F. What would be the most popular dance?

- J.L. Och well, I'll tell you now there was two dances, and if ever you hear them talked about or if ever you seen them done they'd set you dancing the whole night, was the sets and the lancers. There was two dances and as sure as Christ you'd rather be away home as be asked to play them at all. They would not know when to quit. The lancers was the thing. But they all measured up, I don't know how many was in the lancers. It's that long since I played for it I wouldn't know the tunes for it hardly. You never seen them done did you? They all marched up around the floor like maybe a 'Waves of Tory', and there was all different, and a boy was the chief with the staff, he shout what to do, the boy, the leader. And you put into your places there and you all got into a different place. Jesus, I can't mind it, the movement of the lancers. There's no boy'd know it yet.
- A.F. What type of tune would you play for lancers now? Reels or a jig?
- J.L. Well, you could play different things for the different part of the dance, whatever was needed, you know. The same as you play the three tunes there and change into different tempo you know, for the three tunes. Well, there was different parts of this dance that were played to the different, and you know'd that was playing for the lancers you had this group of stuff made up and you maybe switched to march awhile and they all went round, you know. And there might be another bit of an old tune [ilts a few bars] and they're all jiggig about with this. An ould jiggy thing you know, an ould jiggy tune, a living ould thing you know. And then maybe it'd drop down into whatever the boy gave out the orders for to do next.
- A.F. They'd keep on changing the rhythms then?
- J.L. Ay, he'd give the shout, you know, the boy that was at the head of the thing, and then everybody went into their own line again, whatever the hell, like a bridge... There was a whole lot of different figures in the lancers.
- A.F. Go on for hours would it?
- J.L. Ay, the lancers was an awful dance to play for. The sets, you know, the sets was done with eight, that was two fours, and the half set was only two and two. If you were doing the half set, they weren't done like the sets that we watch now like, the Clare sets, you know, or the polka. They were done in a sort of a waltz step kind of thing to marches.
- A.F. Well, what type of dances would go for reels now, what dances would you play a reel for?
- J.L. Oh well, then you had... Well, I'll tell you what you had now if you were called out for a reel. You had two women or two men, singly, danced reels one facing the other if they called out for a reel, and maybe he'd come out here and step up here in the middle of the floor and another boy just would jump up and face him down yonder, and that might last for an hour. All different steps.
- A.F. Were they trying to be better than the other fellow?
- J.L. Well, I suppose there was pride and all that one man'd be better, would try to be better than the other anyway like, no matter what you were doing you'd nearly try to be better. Like there'd be better stuff than them down there may-

be than up here. And this boy maybe might be hitting it brave and hard with a pair of nail boots on.

A.F. Can you do those steps?

J.L. Oh, damn the bit now.

A.F. Would the women do the same steps as the men?

J.L. Ay, ay, but then it'd be the other way about you see. If there were them two men well there might be two women that was terrible good at reel dancing, and they want to get up too, whether to try to beat the other or just be partners or what, you wouldn't know, but they danced again each other just in two singles and went down that way and sometimes the one that'd be here would be down yonder and sometimes that one would make a ring and go up by here, up to this place. Face each other in different places you know. And then the last way they finished the reel you'd just go down there. Get up and go down there a bit. They would just walk down after they finished the reel you know and they just do this here, [swing the partner] way over like that and that would finish the whole thing. If two men was dancing you know when they're going to do that to its quitting time. But Jesus they might dance reels for a long time before them men'd give in, or the two women either. And onced you seen them go down like that and do that swirly thing there, well, the whole thing was over. I mind two men out there, Brian McAleer and one of them old men that I mentioned, he was a fiddle player, you'd get him to dance a bit at the dance. He was Paddy Keenan as I mentioned him there. Well, Paddy would go around, but Paddy was a great fiddle player, lived up the Carrickmore road there. But Paddy would go out and whenever the thing would get going good on a drop of poteen — it was going about in bowls that time there was no glasses yet, ye mind. I mean it was a bowl for you, you drunk it out of a bowl. And if you got a lot of bowls of that, mind, you didn't care what you done. You could dance if you never danced in your life. And I mind me and another man, many a time he talked about it before he died there, he saying to me, 'You made songs one night in a place and I think we did too, there was songs we couldn't sing again, for we never minded them after and it was the poteen that was singing.' But then I mind Keenan and this man Brian McAleer, there was a big barn dance in it one night and the thing got going that good and Brian came out of the kitchen. Och, he was going on maybe seventy years of age at the time. But a light, thin man, ye know, and always with good spirit. Great singer too. And him and Keenan hit the floor for a reel. Well, if you seen them two men dancing, boy, they were dancing from when they were young fellows you know, in their youth, and still this was a great meeting for them to meet again, two old men, ye know, they'd been dancing whenever they were young fellows. I'll tell you what they done too and they sung together and they herded, when there was no ditches and no fences about and you went out and herded your cattle the whole day and him and Brian was raised together. That was Keenan's farm there and McAleer's farm, was here, and the two men was herding on the one mountain together and they sung together the whole day and exchanged songs. And Brian and him going out that night on the floor and if you seen them boys, you would just think their legs was rubber. I could mind Brian McAleer, you want to see that man and him over eighty, and the thin, light legs of him, and I can see him yet. And Keenan was down below, and Keenan was a small man, a small tight wee man, sort of wee pernicky man, ye know, and he was down there dancing. And Keenan





and McAleer was up and then they would change places. Well, you want to see McAleer: you'd think the legs was rubber, for a man like that no pains nor arthritis nor rheumatism nor damn what else. He was quivering and carrying on with his feet and Keenan was down below and Keenan was putting in nice fancy steps you know. Ah Jesus, you'd want to see them two men dancing, you could have played for them for a week.

A.F. Was it all fiddlers now playing at the dances?

J.L. There was this other boy named Nugent with a melodeon, he was a great go, because he rose the noise you know. He didn't need to be that good, he might shout, 'Ho,' in places he didn't know the tune. He'd give the shout 'Ho,' then you'd think he was enjoying it, maybe he didn't know that part of the tune at all. Oh, I seen many a boy doing that. Didn't know the tune right at all and he'd be pulling away 'Ho!' That's the place he missed. There be no remarks passed, you'd think he was enjoying the dancing.

A.F. Well, what about highlands? Did they dance many highlands?

J.L. Oh Christ, highlands surely. Sure that was the whole go, highlands, sure they danced highlands.

A.F. Was that the most popular dance?

J.L. Och ay, a terror around here ... ah, but Lord God, there was some great Highland dancers ... and there is yet... You know what it is, I would play for a week for people doing highlands and they're doing great. In a place there not so long ago, there was only a few gathered, danced highlands the whole night. It'll not be long till they're out again, for there's a Yankee home and out and they'll all be at it again. The highlands would be Scotch dances you know. And what was that lancers, was it not a Scotch dance? I think it was too.

A.F. Would you reckon there's a lot of Scotch music in this area?

J.L. There was, there was. And even your songs, and even your songs caught up with the Scots. They did. Because I'll tell you. You had your people went over to what they called a spud gathering and harvest labouring, you know. Man and girls went over from this country to Scotland and they caught on to them songs, and that's what took them songs across here. Well, ye'd get songs, I suppose, that belonged to this country too, some about emigration and one thing and another. Well you'd get the other songs, like, with a Scotch touch about them, you'd get them. And now there's a lot of them all turned into different versions and things.

A.F. But Turbit now, his playing to me sounds a lot more Scottish than, say, John McKeown's playing. Peter definitely had a bit of a Scottish touch.

J.L. Ay, well I'll tell you about Peter's fiddling. What I would count as Scotch, that it's a raw open fiddling Peter has, you know.

A.F. So was Peter's playing from Ned Turbit then?

J.L. 'Twould be, 'twould.

- A.F. A curious type of playing though. The rhythm is very strange on it, the way they play a reel, very slow. Would they have danced to Peter's type of reel now?
- J.L. Oh, ay.
- A.F. Because you know it's very slow like than 'Errigal Braes'; almost like a highland or hornpipe.
- J.L. Sure, I'll tell you better than that too. I'll tell you better than that about some of the men playing and dancing reels. There were good reel dancers about here, wouldn't they ask you to play a hornpipe? Ay, so that was a funny thing, that a man getting out to dance a reel would ask you to play a hornpipe. Wouldn't you think that funny. And whatever Hell steps or whatever way he had he was dancing the reel to the... Ay, you see he was getting in these steps with it.
- A.F. Do you think they were playing tunes faster or slower in the old days?
- J.L. They were playing them slower and they were playing different tunes altogether. Wherever the Hell they were coming out of or whatever tunes they were. They were playing the single reel that time. And it was more for that boy I'm talking about dancing... I think the single reel. You know the way we play a reel, double parts there. Goes over it twice there. Well they only done a reel once, like the 'Blackhaired Lass' and 'The Scotch Mary' and them's is hitting me in my mind like. Them's the ones that stand in my mind [lilts a few bars]. They would only play that reel single now [lilts] ye see. They wouldn't go over it twice. They played it single.
- A.F. Would they play more than one tune at the same time — like, would they go from one tune to another, or would they just play one tune?
- J.L. I think now as far as I know about them playing, they only played one at a time. There was none of that business now of running two or three tunes into other. I'll tell you who took that up and it might have been the start of it, Coleman's records putting two or three together. I talked about ... well the four-hand reel was an old dance, what they called the old four-hand reel. Well the old four-hand reel you played some of them dances and some of them reels for it and ye played it till it was quit; ye never changed. Ye never changed out of the tune you started; you played it away all the time. But I wouldn't turn down the tape or a record played because they took the tunes off Coleman. Not but them old men would have give a touch of Coleman's playing that time too, ye just can't run down the young player for doing it. The old man caught a bit of that too. Ye'd got men yet with a terrible lot of good Coleman touch through them, that took off a 78 record, like Paddy Killoran. All the same you get the other man that learned them off the 78 record but he learned them his own way, he listen to the record in some house and went home and took the reel with him. It wasn't every house they was a gramophone in. You'd be very traditional, like, when you'd take a couple of records home and the Coleman's with ye out of the town, same as they'd take 'Big Tom' or them boys now or 'The Silver Dollar'. But if you went to the house and was interested in fiddle playing, like we are today, and you knowed that those tunes, records of either Paddy Killoran or Michael Coleman were there. You got them people to play that till the needle was nearly through for to get the tunes learned, that's what you done long ago, and you learned them tunes. Well, you learned them in your head, you whistled them through the bog or through the fields of praties

or wherever you were the next day or the cornfield lifting corn, you had that whistled as well as you could and any chance you got you'd put it on the fiddle then. You were playing it whatever way it got up under the eyebrows — whatever way it got in there. Then you'd got the other man, which was the type of player that's going about yet now and he listening in some room and he had Coleman along with him in the room, going round on this gramophone. Ay, and he was doing everything Coleman was doing and nothing else would do him only the Coleman, and he imitated Coleman, you've got that fella too at that time, that's away thirty years ago ye see.

- A.F. It changed the music I think. People stopped playing the local tunes, stopped playing the local way.
- J.L. Ay, but you're other players now that played on their own way and they got tunes from other places or wherever they gathered them up. That Micky Nugent, that ould Micky Nugent out here. Holy God Almighty, that man had tunes you never hear tell of in you're life or never will again. Jeapers Christ, Micky Nugent had some terrible tunes. Well, Micky played in the States and all, he was out from the ordinary player. Micky Nugent was a terrible good player you know... And he held the fiddle like ... there was a touch of Doherty, Doherty type. He held the bloody thing like this, and you wouldn't know whether the bow was under the bridge or over it or where the Hell the bow was. All this fiddle going on and all this bloody bowing ... Micky's a good while dead now. A big strong man, you know, big man and then the cap would be up here on him when he'd start and the next thing it'd be going out over the back of the head. The cap'd be well down on him there. Lord to God, where would you get a better fiddle player than Micky Nugent. You know what it is, you talk about the fella way out there, Jimmy McKillop an All Ireland Champion. If Micky Nugent stood on that floor and played a fiddle you know where Pomeroy Square is, where the church is where you come down, well you'd hear the fiddle on that diamont on that square up there. I never heard like for the ordinary country players. But a funny thing, there was the name of Nugent, and music run in the Nugent and the name of Nugent. All Nugents round this area and up in Fermanagh, like Packy and Sean, they was all fiddlers. What the heck, that was the name of Nugent and it was all playin' the fiddles... The whole thing going good boy and Nugent and McCabe playing for hell. Drinking poteen from ... them big mugs and oul' things, might be a hundred years of age, some flowers on them. Them oul' mugs, ye know, blue bars around them, blue and white bars, and that'd be all set round the petrol drum and them playing away and then this two pound tin of Tate and Lyle would come out and a big lion on the box and his two paws out and him looking round him, this big bear or whatever he was, like a big Alsatian and the box would be left out and everybody would go for this syrup and you wouldn't have time to twist it up or screw it up ye know, and ye'd have your farl of bread in your hand and do all the thing yourself after the table was set and you don't put the lid up on the syrup and ye start to twist this knife around or spoon to try to get it out. And some boy going away by the fire away by his chair or wherever he was and this string o' syrup away out after him away on, and that was all in good favour and was grand. You come out of Nugent's at three, two o'clock in the morning and there was talk about ghosts being about. Damn the Hell you cared whether you seen a ghost or not.

A.F. You remember that house you pointed out to us once. You said a fiddler had been walking by; there was a party going on and he went in to play and woke up the next morning and he was in a ruin.

J.L. That's right... At the cross-roads.

A.F. Tell that story now.

J.L. That was Nugent. Ah, that was Nugent coming home.

A.F. And what happened?

J.L. Ach, he was coming home: I suppose the poteen was working too as well as the ruins of the house I suppose. He got drunk, and it was all home stuff. Paddy O'Briens and them men, if there was a big party, I heard them tell that O'Briens and Nugent and Eoin Kelly and maybe Master McDermott and the rest of them they're all dead, too. And there's a creamery can, ye know what a creamery churn be, it was sitting down, the galvanised creamery churn, maybe a gallon of poteen would be in it. It was sitting down at the bottom of the kitchen and there was just a tin hanging on it and ye just went down and filled your bowl the best of good clear poteen...

Mrs. Ye could madden man!

L.

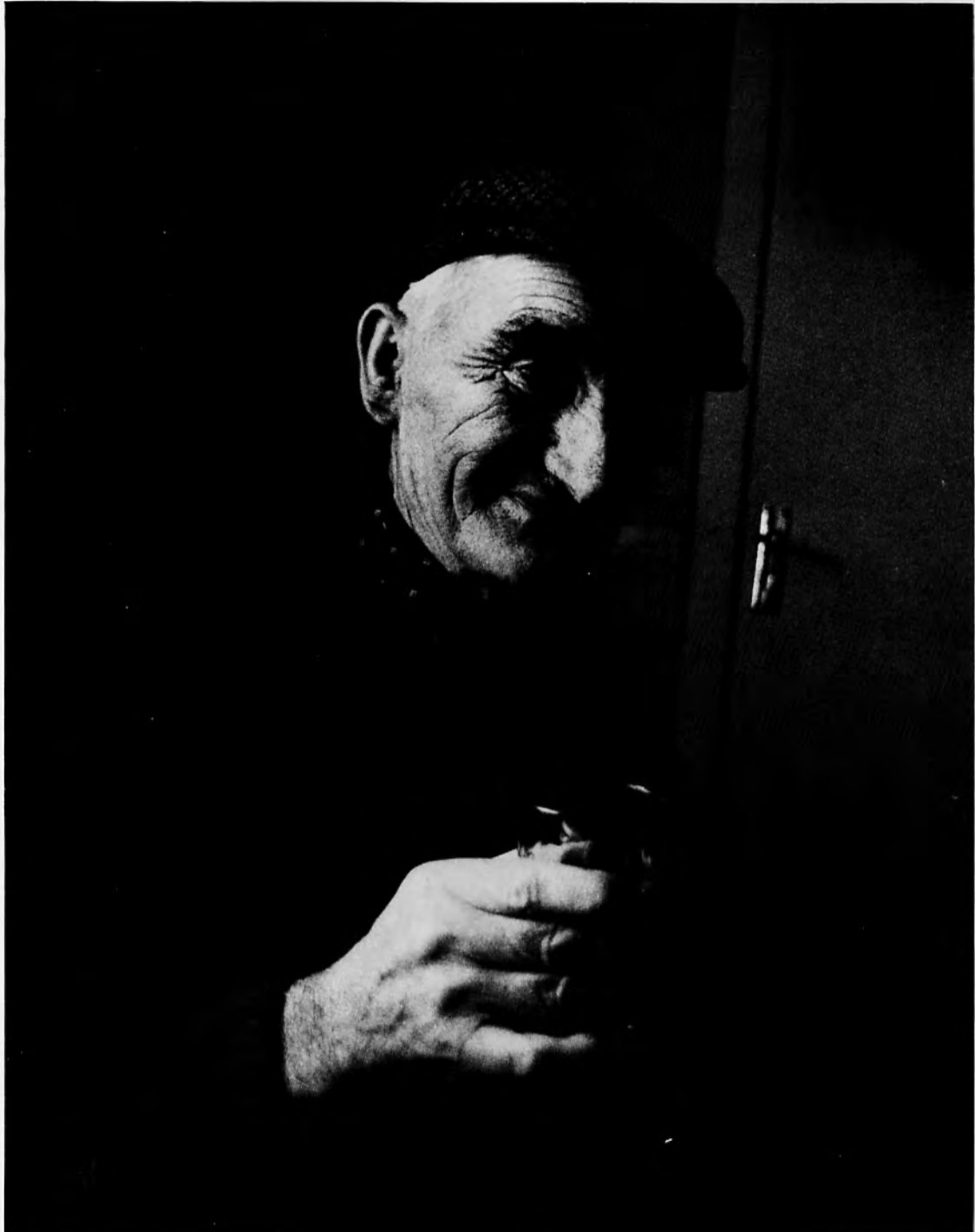
J.L. ... And I hear it told that Nugent had that much poteen in him that same night that he went to the house one night and this poteen was going about and Nugent, somebody thought he was going to destroy the bow and somebody went over, put their hand over and took the bow out of his hand, and Nugent fiddled away with no bow, way on up and down and they thought maybe that he would get very bad and that he'd drop the fiddle and somebody just went over caught the neck of the fiddle. He played away the night with no fiddle up here and he played away with no bow down below. The poteen was in and working well boys, while he played away at these tunes. That's what Nugent would do ye see... Nugent was a terrific player and wouldn't play if he thought he was making mistakes or letting himself down; he wouldn't play at all, if there was too much drink on the job. But the poteen now was going good, ye see. After that he was coming home with the fiddle (by thon old place... he told me himself... Ah, Johnny'll tell ye, Johnny'll tell ye all these old pieces ye know, ghost stories and things and all ye know. Ah, he probably seen a light in it, or he thought there was a light in it and he staggered in it. The house was down I think, bravely scattered maybe, there'd been nobody in it for years. He thought he was in a wake house or something to hear him tell it or some damn thing, there'd be all this crack about it... Ay, he thought there was a crowd. But maybe it was just where he left, maybe he was playing the fiddle the while before, it was still in his head the whole time maybe.

A.F. And was it a wake, with candles in the house?

J.L. Ay, maybe where he left the good crack before was still on his eyes coming down the road, wherever he come from. Oh, he played all right for the dancers, but he could mind going into it and all. But there was no place there; sure the house was down at the time.

A.F. Good stuff that poteen.

J.L. Oh good, surely to God. You'd never be alone. A crowd of ye if ye took plenty of poteen. You'd see plenty round ye. Ay, surely to God like, Oh ay, they'll multiply and where there'd be one when ye left there'd be twenty-one. Oh, poteen was the quare stuff... But when ye could play away and the bow not there at all it was good. When you could play away at the fiddle... you're doing terrible well.



The late Jimmy  
Haughey

- A.F. Did you ever play with Master McDermott?
- J.L. ... In my life I never met McDermott. I never met McDermott.
- A.F. Well, what are the stories about him?
- J.L. Ah, there would have been, oh ay. But you've only to meet one man... McKeown should have a lot of them. McKeown was a pupil of McDermott's. Younger than the older men, he was a younger boy. Liam Donaghue was a younger man again. Well, Liam and McKeown would be somewhat of the same age.
- A.F. McDermott taught them to play, did he?
- J.L. Yes, yes.
- A.F. Was he from around here, was he a local man?
- J.L. McKeown's, out farther out the road, Terry Shauneay, Terry Shauneay the man I was talking about was his neighbour, and Paddy O'Briens was the next door neighbour, the man I'm talking about playing the different versions of 'Sleepy Maggie', Jimmy, Jimmy Donahy. All them one group of men was all around McDermott's house living just a stone throw. Eoin Kelly, Eoin Kelly was another man. All of them good fiddle players was just round McDermott's. They used to be playing every night. Yes, it was playing every night in McDermott's. McDermott's was a great house. And then Paddy Nugent told me about McDermott. If you had any wee fault at all or any wee flaw in playing, McDermott wouldn't show you up. He had all them good points. He wouldn't show you up in a crowd there. But I'll tell you what he'd do, when you'd be going out he'd tap you on the shoulder or give you a wee tap on the arm. 'Be down tomorrow night,' Pat or Joe or Micky or whatever they call you. And the other boys wouldn't be coming down, he'd want you down on your own and he'd straighten you out on all the places where you were making the mistakes the night before. He wouldn't show you up along with them ones, he wouldn't show you up, make little of ye along with the good players. McDermott said that if ever you got a fiddle handed to you belonging to any other man there and ye know the way it might be fiddles just wouldn't please you to your ear, the way any other man'd tune her. He always said to never tune her after you took her up, play a couple of tunes on her even if she wasn't pleasing you and then let on that she went out of tune on ye and start to tune her then. Just don't take a fiddle from a man because you would nearly say, 'What the Hell's wrong with her he can't play her and I was playing her,' ye know. 'Why is he tuning her and me playing he well all day!' ye see. She just mightn't be up to the standard and he would say, play away on her and let on that she went out a wee bit out of line with you there and start giving her a twist or two then. But that was all McDermott's, that was McDermott's moves.
- A.F. He played the pipes too, didn't he?
- J.L. He did.
- A.F. Was it the war pipes now, the big pipes, or the uilleann pipes?

Francie Quinn,  
from near  
Dromore, Co  
Tyrone





- J.L. I don't know what the Hell... I never heard him play. But he could have played tin whistles or anything ye know, or flute. He was a musician. McDermott was a... But they say he was a great fiddle player.
- A.F. What years was he going around. When was he teaching, was it the Thirties or the Forties?
- J.L. Ay, the Twenties and the Thirties... See that reel that he made there.
- A.F. Yes, 'McDermott's Reel'.
- J.L. Ay, well that's 'Master McDermott's Reel'. Well a lot of cases you'd hear that called out Lord McDermott's Reel. But Master McDermott was no Lord; he was just an ordinary rough fella living up there. I could take you to where he was living.
- A.F. Did he compose many tunes?
- J.L. Oh a lot, he did, he did. A lot of good tunes. Willie Donnelly has a lot of his stuff and I think McKeown would have it too if he'd just mind them... One night there was a wee while back ago there were a great party down in a house here and Father Johnson of Gortmore was there and like a funny thing about the night it was to be a guest tea and a bit of music. Well, there wasn't three tunes played the whole night. Ah sure, I started to crack stuff like this here, ye know, and Father Johnson and the rest of the house, the party that was in the house, lay back on sofas and settees and things the whole night. And what time did I leave at in the morning, a quarter to five I think in the morning and I never played only three tunes. It was all stories I told the whole night... It was to be a night for that caper. And he was coming an odd one himself ye know and whenever he'd be finished I'd might be have two better ones in the head again; cracks that really happened and things like, ye know ... stories that was really right just the funny way they happened... But them old men ye see, they were very funny people. Ay well, there was something great in them like. If they said something they said it that funny that they meant ... there was something in it, even the way they say the thing to ye. They said some very funny things, I even hear a programme here not so long ago and I forgot more about it than the boys that was telling the stories myself. I forgot more about what thon boys was telling me on thon radio and he was telling about things that was said and the wonderful way old people said things, the funny way they said them and he went over a lot of wee pieces of crack ye know. Well, I'm standing here and I forgot more than thon boy ever learned about pieces like that, that's what I did when them boys was in them. You must come up with that, ye must come up with that through the years.

John Loughran in  
his house at  
Pomeroy Co  
Tyrone



John Boughton in his home - Pomaroy 14. 7. '77 O. White '77



John McKeown Cappagh, Co Tyrone 16. 7. '77

# Double Jigs

J.L. John Loughran; J.McK. John McKeown; P.T. Peter Turbit

## The Boys of the Town

J.McK.

Musical notation for 'The Boys of the Town' by J.McK. The piece is in G major and 6/8 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains the first six measures. The second staff contains measures 7-12, with a repeat sign at the end of measure 12. The third staff contains measures 13-18, ending with a final cadence marked 'last:'. The melody is characterized by eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets and grace notes.

## The Connaught Man's Rambles

P.T.

Musical notation for 'The Connaught Man's Rambles' by P.T. The piece is in G major and 6/8 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff contains the first six measures. The second staff contains measures 7-12, ending with a repeat sign. The third staff contains measures 13-18, with an accent (^) over the eighth note in measure 14. The fourth staff contains measures 19-24, also with an accent (^) over the eighth note in measure 20. The melody is primarily composed of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Humours of Glendart

J. McK.

Musical notation for 'Humours of Glendart' in G major, 6/8 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second and third staves continue the melody. The third staff ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note, with the word 'last:' written below it.

Untitled Jig

J. L.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Jig' in G major, 6/8 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second and third staves continue the melody. The third staff ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note, with the word 'end' written above it.

Untitled Jig

P. T.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Jig' in G major, 6/8 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second and third staves continue the melody. The fourth staff ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note, with the word 'end' written above it. There are first and second endings marked with '1' and '2' above the notes.

Untitled Jig

J.L.

Musical notation for the first jig, J.L. It consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The first staff contains the first six measures. The second staff contains measures 7-10, with a repeat sign at the end of measure 10. The third staff contains measures 11-14, with a repeat sign at the end of measure 14.

Untitled Jig

P.T.

Musical notation for the second jig, P.T. It consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The first staff contains the first six measures. The second staff contains measures 7-10, with a repeat sign at the end of measure 10. The third staff contains measures 11-14, with a repeat sign at the end of measure 14. The fourth staff contains measures 15-18, with a repeat sign at the end of measure 18.

Untitled Jig

P.T.

Musical notation for the third jig, P.T. It consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The first staff contains the first six measures. The second staff contains measures 7-10, with a repeat sign at the end of measure 10. The third staff contains measures 11-14, with a repeat sign at the end of measure 14. The fourth staff contains measures 15-18, with a repeat sign at the end of measure 18.

Untitled Jig

J. McK.

Musical score for 'Untitled Jig' by J. McK. in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The score consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff contains two first endings, labeled '1' and '2', which lead to different parts of the piece. The third staff continues the melody with another pair of first and second endings. The fourth staff shows the continuation of the piece. The fifth staff features another pair of first and second endings. The sixth staff concludes the piece with a final ending and a double bar line.

Untitled Jig

P. T.

Musical score for 'Untitled Jig' by P. T. in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a final ending and a double bar line.

Untitled Jig

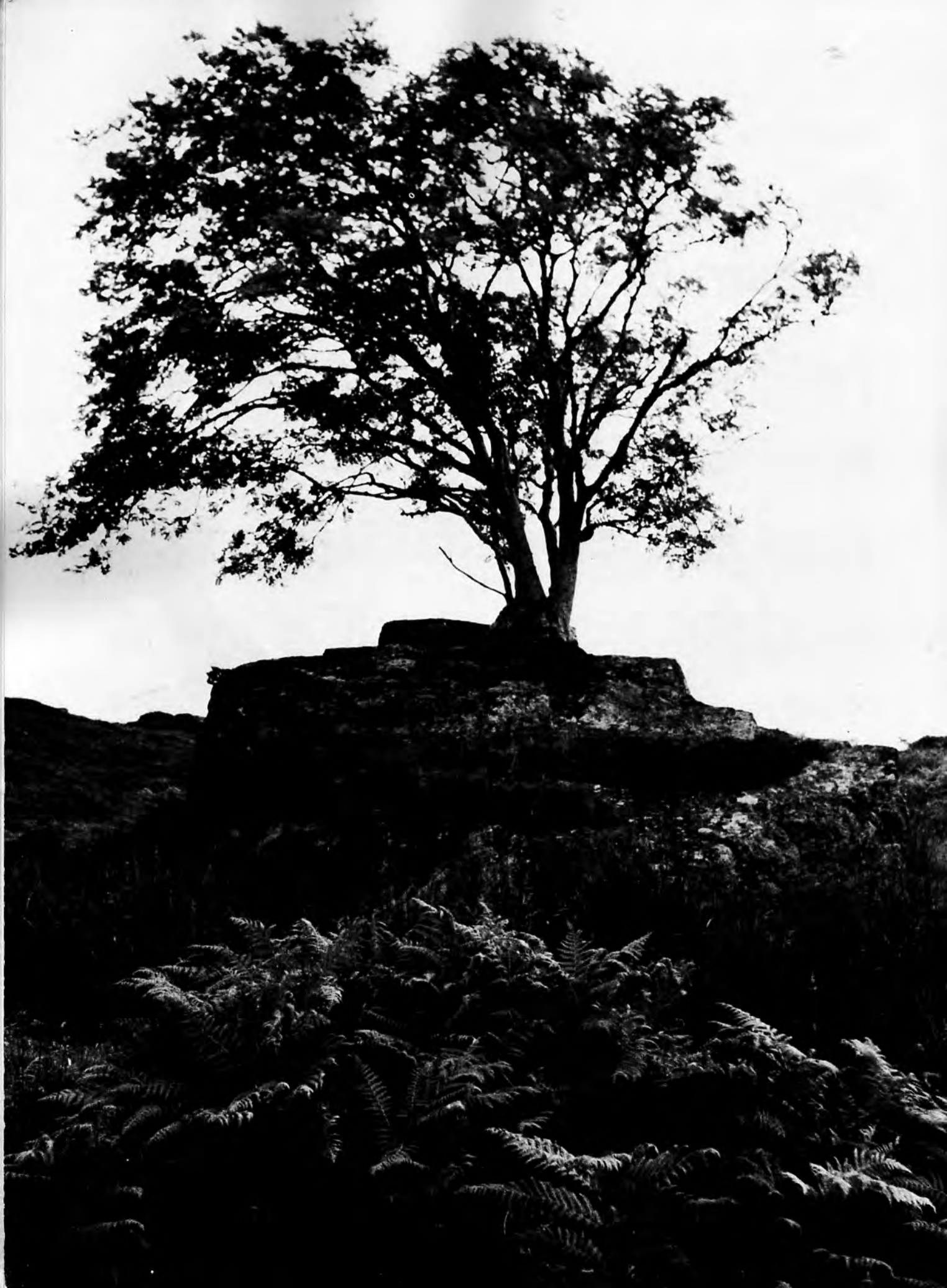
P.T.

Untitled Jig

P.T.

*♯ : C half-sharp throughout*





# Reels

## Byrne's Reel

J. McK.



Musical notation for Byrne's Reel, consisting of three staves. The first staff is the melody in G major, 2/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second and third staves provide accompaniment, with the second staff starting with a treble clef and the third staff starting with a bass clef. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

## Drowsy Maggie

P. T.



Musical notation for Drowsy Maggie, consisting of four staves. The first staff is the melody in G major, 2/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second and third staves provide accompaniment, with the second staff starting with a treble clef and the third staff starting with a bass clef. The fourth staff continues the accompaniment. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

# The Drunken Piper

J. McK.

Musical score for 'The Drunken Piper' in G major (one sharp) and common time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first two staves are the main melody, with the second staff including first and second endings. The third and fourth staves provide a harmonic accompaniment, with the fourth staff also featuring first and second endings.

# The Drunken Reel

P. T.

Musical score for 'The Drunken Reel' in G major (one sharp) and common time. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first two staves are the main melody, and the third staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

# Errigal Braes

P. T.

Musical score for 'Errigal Braes' in G major (one sharp) and common time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first two staves are the main melody, and the third and fourth staves provide a harmonic accompaniment. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

The Four Courts

J. McK.

Musical score for 'The Four Courts' by J. McK. The score consists of six staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first four staves contain a single melodic line with various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes. The fifth and sixth staves provide a harmonic accompaniment using chords and moving bass lines.

The Highland Man who kissed his Grannie

P. T.

Musical score for 'The Highland Man who kissed his Grannie' by P. T. The score consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first two staves feature a single melodic line with a prominent eighth-note pattern. The third and fourth staves provide a harmonic accompaniment with chords and a steady bass line.

# The Holly Bush

P.T.

Musical notation for 'The Holly Bush' in G major, 2/4 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in a single voice. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff features a repeat sign at the beginning and includes a fermata over the final note. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a final cadence.

# Judes Bush

J.L.

Musical notation for 'Judes Bush' in G major, 2/4 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in a single voice. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff features a repeat sign at the beginning and includes a fermata over the final note. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a final cadence.

# Kitty Gordons

P.T.

Musical notation for 'Kitty Gordons' in G major, 2/4 time. The piece consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in a single voice. The second staff concludes the piece with a final cadence.

(continued)

Two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first staff contains four measures, and the second staff contains four measures, ending with a double bar line.

Low Park

J. McK.

Five staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first staff contains four measures, the second and third staves each contain four measures, and the fourth and fifth staves each contain four measures, ending with a double bar line.

Make your Breakfast Early

P. T.

Five staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first and second staves each contain four measures, the third and fourth staves each contain four measures, and the fifth staff contains four measures, ending with a double bar line.

# The Road to Brighton

J.L.

Musical score for 'The Road to Brighton' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff is the melody, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second staff is a second melodic line. The third and fourth staves are accompaniment, featuring a steady eighth-note pattern. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

# Sleepy Maggie

P.T.

Musical score for 'Sleepy Maggie' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of three staves. The first staff is the melody, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The second and third staves are accompaniment, featuring a steady eighth-note pattern. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

# Sporting Days of Easter

J.L.

Musical score for 'Sporting Days of Easter' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of three staves. The first staff is the melody, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second and third staves are accompaniment, featuring a steady eighth-note pattern. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

# Turniskey Lasses

P.T.





Untitled Reel

J.L.

Musical score for 'Untitled Reel' by J.L. The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign. The second staff contains two first and second endings, marked with '1' and '2' above the notes. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff also contains two first and second endings, marked with '1' and '2' above the notes.

Untitled Reel

J.L.

Musical score for 'Untitled Reel' by J.L. The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign. The second staff contains two first and second endings, marked with '1' and '2' above the notes. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff also contains two first and second endings, marked with '1' and '2' above the notes.

Untitled Reel

J.McK.

Musical score for 'Untitled Reel' by J.McK. The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign. The second staff contains two first and second endings, marked with '1' and '2' above the notes.

Untitled Reel

J. McK.

Musical notation for the first reel, consisting of two staves. The first staff contains the main melody. The second staff contains a variation with first and second endings, marked '1' and '2', and ends with 'end' and 'd.c.'.

Untitled Reel

J. McK.

Musical notation for the second reel, consisting of four staves of music.

Untitled Reel

J. McK.

Musical notation for the third reel, consisting of four staves of music.

Untitled Reel

J. McK.

The first reel consists of four staves of music. The first two staves are the melody, and the last two are the accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The melody starts with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The accompaniment consists of eighth notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4.

Untitled Reel

P. T.

The second reel consists of three staves of music. The first staff is the melody, and the last two are the accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The melody starts with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The accompaniment consists of eighth notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4.

# Barndances, Highlands, Hornpipes, Marches and Polkas

By the Fort how sad was I (March)

J. McK.

Musical score for 'By the Fort how sad was I (March)' in G major, common time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note, with the word 'last:' written below the staff.

Kildare Fancy (Hornpipe)

P. T.

Musical score for 'Kildare Fancy (Hornpipe)' in G major, common time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note, with the word 'last:' written above the staff.

The Gander's Strut

P.T.

Musical notation for 'The Gander's Strut' in G major, 2/4 time. The piece consists of two staves. The first staff contains the melody, and the second staff contains the accompaniment. The melody starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The accompaniment starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled Hornpipe

P.T.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Hornpipe' in G major, 2/4 time. The piece consists of four staves. The first staff contains the melody, and the second, third, and fourth staves contain the accompaniment. The melody starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The accompaniment starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled Hornpipe

P.T.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Hornpipe' in G major, 2/4 time. The piece consists of four staves. The first staff contains the melody, and the second, third, and fourth staves contain the accompaniment. The melody starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The accompaniment starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. There are first and second endings marked with '1' and '2' above the notes.

Untitled Hornpipe

P.T.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Hornpipe' in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody is characterized by eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet markings. The second staff continues the melody and includes a double bar line with repeat dots. The third and fourth staves complete the piece with similar rhythmic patterns.

The Lass of Killiecrankie Highland

J.L.

Musical notation for 'The Lass of Killiecrankie Highland' in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody is primarily composed of quarter and eighth notes. The second and third staves continue the melody, with the third staff ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Untitled Polka

P.T.

Musical notation for 'Untitled Polka' in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). It includes a first ending bracket labeled '1' and a second ending bracket labeled '2'. The second staff continues the melody with similar first and second ending brackets. The third and fourth staves complete the piece, with the fourth staff ending with a double bar line and repeat dots. A '4.5' marking is present at the bottom of the fourth staff.

## Appendix I: Notes on the Transcriptions

The fermata ( $\frown$ ) is not used to denote a pause, but only to show which note a piece ends on. A lengthened note is marked with a horizontal stroke (e.g. in 'Lord Mayo'). A sloping stroke before a note means a slide up (or down) to that note, usually from a semitone away, but sometimes more. There is an ornament which consists of sliding below and back up to a note and this is shown by two sloping strokes.

A vertical arrow means the note is slightly sharpened or flattened, up to half a semitone.

For most of these conventions, and those concerning time signatures, I am indebted to Brendan Breathnach.

## Appendix II: Fiddling Styles

One has to be careful in discussing diverse styles of fiddling within Counties Donegal and Tyrone due to the decimation of fiddlers because of cultural change and death. One has to distinguish between what is a purely personal style of playing and what is a regional style — a fiddling aesthetic shared by several fiddlers in the same region. In Tyrone, due to the contemporary scarcity of accomplished fiddlers who play in the old style within each section of the county, these distinctions were almost impossible to make. John McKeown did learn to play the fiddle from Master McDermott who taught several contemporaries of McKeown, but it is not known to what extent McDermott drew on older fiddling traditions in that part of Tyrone or how much of his fiddling was based on a personal style. Peter Turbit's playing displays so many idiosyncrasies, particularly in his rhythmic tempo that if it was not a style shared by other players in the Ballygawley area, he would not have been able to play with other fiddlers. John Loughran has confirmed that the tempo of dancing in that part of Tyrone conformed to the pace of Turbit's style of fiddling.

The remarkable similarity between Turbit's fiddling and the fiddle styles of the Appalachian mountain region of the United States possibly dates Turbit's style back to the late eighteenth century, which was the period in history when there was a fairly substantial migration from Ulster to the Appalachians.

Fortunately, in Donegal there was more evidence available: that would allow one to move beyond an individual player's approach to that which implies a regional aesthetic. The region of Donegal covered in our collecting extends westward from the Glens of Glenties to the South Rosses and southward towards the parishes of Kilcar and Glencolumbkille. This is the area where there seemed to be the greatest proliferation of fiddlers. John Doherty has confirmed that even when he was a child, this was the part of Donegal known for its fiddling. On the basis of the recordings made, I have been able to identify four basic regional styles extant in this part of Donegal. By

and large these styles conform to the natural boundaries separating the regions. They are:

1. South Rosses
2. Kilcar/Glencolumbkille
3. Teelin
4. Glens of Glenties

All these regional variations possess a common stylistic ground and repertoire that indicates a general County Donegal style. These characteristics are:

1. Utilisation of fairly complex bowing, a dependence on bowing for ornamentation, and emphasis on a short bow, or staccato sound, and the strong use of bowed drones either for harmonic or rhythmic effect.
2. Conservative use of fingered ornamentation.

The factors that basically differentiate the various inter-regional styles are:

1. Rhythmic approach to bowing.
2. The extent to which the Highland pipes have influenced the fingering and bowing style, and the manner in which the fiddler has recreated the piping style on his instrument.

The styles are:

1. *Rosses Style.*

Basically this is associated with the playing of the Doherty family which was based, from the middle of the eighteenth into the middle of the nineteenth century in the Lettermacaward district. This style can be heard all around the Dungloe area as well. Due to the travels of the Dohertys, and their strong musical influence, this style of playing can be found in other parts of Donegal, particularly Ar dara. Danny O'Donnell from Meenabanad, near Dungloe, plays more or less in this style, as do Sean Gallagher and Josie McHugh of Ar dara. The basic characteristic of this style is the use of one bow stroke per note. The up and down strokes of the bow are given the same rhythmic emphasis and there is an avoidance of rhythmic syncopation i.e. playing on the off beat. The players of this style call it 'strict tempo' or 'strict time'. This style is greatly influenced by the staccato sound of the Highland pipe chanter and it is basically an attempt to imitate the rhythmic inflections of the pipe chanter. The fingered ornamentation, when used, is based again on the Highland pipes. Double stopping or droning is used moderately but precisely, and mainly as a harmonic and not a rhythmic effect.

2. *Kilcar/Glencolumbkille Style.*

If the Rosses style of fiddling can be said to take the stylistic characteristics of the Highland pipes literally, the Kilcar/Glencolumbkille tradition can be said to treat the pipes metaphorically. In this region the bowing is extremely syncopated, using a mixture of short and some slurred (long) bow. The bowing triplet reminiscent of the piper's craan is used more often than in the Rosses style. Droning is of prime importance in this tradition and is used to evoke the harmonies and dissonances of the pipe chanter and its drones. In the South Rosses styles, most double stopping is played on the G and D strings. In the Kilcar/Glencolumbkille style, all the strings are used by the fiddler for droning. It is a common practice for the E string to be played alongside melodic phrases on the A string. Another practice is double note droning, where the same note will be played simultaneously fingered and open on two strings. An example would be the fingering of an E on the A string and the simultaneous playing of the open E string. One



of the more complex techniques of the fiddlers of this region is a particular type of slurring where a long bow will be drawn across two strings simultaneously, and a melodic phrase fingered on one string while a drone note is held on the other. In most cases the drone note is of a lower pitch than the melody line. An example of this would be the fingering of the A note on the G string and the same long bow stroke playing a three or four note phrase on the D string.

### 3. *Teelin Style.*

The Teelin players were influenced in their playing styles by either the Dohertys or the McConnells. The McConnell style was more of a long or slurred bow style and seems related to Fermanagh and Sligo fiddling styles. There was a greater use of left hand ornamentation, possibly influenced by the local liltling. Con Cassidy states that those fiddlers playing in the McConnell styles avoided any of the piping effects that were so popular in Kilcar and Glencolmbkille. In Cassidy's fiddling, double stops are rarely used.

### 4. *Glens of Glenties Style.*

The fiddling of this region seems to lie halfway between the Rosses tradition and the Kilcar/Glencolmbkille tradition. The bowing is highly syncopated, but double stops are used mainly for rhythmic rather than harmonic effect. There is a greater use of slides on the fingering than is found in the other regions. This gives the fiddling a bluesy, wild sound. Simon Doherty plays in this style.

## Appendix III: Transcriptions

The tunes transcribed in this book were taken from recordings made in the field during a two month period in the summer of 1977. This field journey was the culmination of three years of visits to the fiddlers by Natalie Joynt and Allen Feldman. Due to the limitations of time and money, the collecting was not as systematic as we might have wished it. The collectors tended to concentrate on those areas that had a reputation for fiddling and on those musicians who still played with a level of competence. So there are many parts of Donegal and Tyrone that were not touched, and many fiddlers we have yet to meet. In all, twenty-five musicians were recorded: thirteen from Donegal and twelve based in Tyrone.

The selection of tunes appearing in this book was based on the following criteria:

1. To give an idea of the overall repertoire of each musician featured.
2. To emphasise tunes that illustrated the regional divergences from the mainstream of contemporary Irish traditional music.

The second criterion, in some cases, radically modified the way in which each fiddler's repertoire was represented.

The tunes that were transcribed were selected for the following reasons:

1. They were unknown outside their immediate environment. In other words, they were either not in print in any of the major tune collections or they were not

played by the younger generation of Irish musicians, due to their regional origins and unavailability of the tunes.

2. In some cases the tunes were unusual variants of a commonly known tune: as an example, the versions of 'Drowsy Maggie' that appear in the collection.
3. A commonly known tune was selected if the fiddler who played it had given it an unusual setting or arrangement by use of ornamentations and phrasing. An example of this is John McKeown's setting of the 'Four Courts Reel'.

As a consequence, if a certain fiddler featured has more jigs to his credit than reels in this book, it does not mean that he actually knows more jigs than reels or that jigs were a more popular dance than reels, but only that he knows more rare jigs than he knows unusual reels, according to the criteria listed above. In some few instances, we may have misrepresented the profile of a musician's repertoire for the reasons already stated. In most cases, though, the collectors' criteria, and the musicians' repertoire matched perfectly. For example, the reason why there are more highlands among the Donegal players than the Tyrone players is the fact that the highland was the most popular dance in Donegal and fiddlers were often judged by the extensiveness of their highland repertoire.

The musicians featured in this book played almost totally for dancers when they were younger. As a consequence, included in their repertoire are imported waltzes, foxtrots, and music-hall airs, which co-existed with the traditional dances. In de-emphasising this aspect of their repertoire, we have again misrepresented the overall picture of the fiddlers' repertoire. John Doherty, in particular, possesses a large number of this type of modern dance tune. The fiddlers' attitudes towards this modern dance music is essentially passive: people wanted to dance to them so the musicians played them. During our sessions they were usually brought out if they involved some bit of tricky fiddling, or because they could not think of a traditional piece to play. We made an exception with the 'Brass Band' march played by Con Cassidy, which possesses a peculiar modal quality not present in the original brass band version.

Limited space prohibited a complete transcribing of a tune with all the variations and ornaments utilised by the fiddler. We have instead presented an 'ideal' setting for the tune, showing the more important decorations and variations, thereby giving the reader an idea of what the fiddler could do to the tune. Bowing has been indicated sporadically. We found no satisfactory way of illustrating bow technique within the confined medium of a printed format. A wholly accurate depiction of the complexity of bow technique would demand video-tape, or slow motion film.



Eamonn O'Doherty was born and raised in Derry. He qualified in architecture at University College, Dublin, and now teaches at the Dublin Institute of Technology. His paintings and graphic work have appeared in numerous exhibitions in Ireland and abroad. He has been interested in Irish music since the late fifties and plays the traditional flute.

Allen Feldman was born in New York City and is a graduate of the New School of Social Research. He has been playing traditional music since the age of fifteen, and has published articles on the subject in *Hibernia* and the *Observer*.

The authors met in 1974, in Boston, Massachusetts.

To audiences both at home and throughout the world, traditional music is arguably the finest, most varied and best-loved manifestation of Irish culture. This superb book records one of the most interesting aspects of this art — that of the solo fiddlers of Tyrone and Donegal. The fiddle was introduced into Ireland in the eighteenth century and its function was to play the music of the dance which, for hundreds of years, was a central part of Irish community life. For the most part, the old ways were destroyed during and after the Second World War, yet despite social indifference and the death of their culture the fiddlers carry on — most of them now old men. They give visitors a warm welcome: fiddles will suddenly appear, brought down from the tops of dressers or taken out of the depths of worn jackets. The straight-backed chair will be drawn from the corner; the musicians move slowly; the fiddle is tuned, the bow rosined. What follows is not only a magnificent virtuoso performance, but the re-animation of a lost way of life.

Allen Feldman's text captures the atmosphere and excitement of the performances and gives a lucid, fascinating account of the historical and social background of the subject. Eamonn O'Doherty's photographs and drawings record with a superb visual eloquence not only the fiddlers themselves, but the lives they lead and the landscape in which they live. Together they have made a fitting tribute to one of Ireland's most beautiful and fragile of treasures.

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