



SONGS OF ARAN

Gaelic Singing from the West of Ireland
Recorded by Sidney Robertson Cowell

LILTING

BEIDH RIL AGAINN (We Will Have A Reel)

MAIRE STANTON (Mary Stanton)

A Song in Praise of CAPTAIN GEORGE O'MALLEY

AMHRAN NA TRAGHA BAINÉ (Song of Trabane)

'T WAS EARLY, EARLY IN THE SPRING

ORO MHILE GRADH (Oro, My Thousand Treasures)

AN CAILIN FEARAMHAIL FIONN (The Fair Brave Girl)

SAGART NA CUILE BAINÉ (The Priest of Coolbawn)

A SHEAIN A MHIC MO CHOMHARSAN (O John, Son of My Neighbor)

AN DROIGHNEAN DONN (The Blackthorn)

MA THEANN TU'UN A AONAIGH (If You Go The Fair)

PEIGI MISTEAL (Peggy Mitchell)

BEAN A' LEANNA (The Ale Woman)

AMHRAN AN TEI (Song of the Tea)

AN TUIRNIN LIN (The Flax Spinning Wheel)

DO-EEN DO A-DIDDLE AM (Vocables)

THREE LULLABIES:

THOBHA MO LEANBH (Hush-O, My Child)

SEO-THIN SEO

SEO-SIN SEO, 'S TU MO LEANBH

CAOINEADH NA MARBH (Caoine for the Dead)

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COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE



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Gaelic Singing from the West of Ireland

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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Introduction by
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The Aran Islands (Inishmore, Inisheer and Inishmaan) are the bare blunt peaks of an underwater spur of the mountains of County Clare. They lie at the mouth of Galway Bay, off the West coast of Ireland. High bluffs on the south and west are continually pounded by Atlantic seas, but on the landward side rocky terraces slope gradually to the water, and there the settlements cluster around sandy bays in the lee of the islands, facing the mountains of Connemara on the mainland, and the old town of Galway. Inishmaan, the little Middle Island, is the locale of Synge's Riders to the Sea, and it was on the largest island (Inishmore, 9 miles long) that Robert Flaherty filmed the greatest of his documentaries, Man of Aran, whose drama lies in man's tormented struggle to sustain life on this inhospitable small rock in the violent Atlantic. Two of the singers on this record, Margaret Dirrane and Bridget Mullin, will be admirably remembered by all who saw the film.

The Aran Islands have been continuously inhabited since the coming of Christianity to Ireland, and there is abundant archeological evidence of much earlier habitation, at a time so long ago that its surviving monuments have been appropriated by legend. The islands are in County Galway, the westernmost part of the wild Kingdom of the West, whose nomadic tribes paid irregular allegiance to the High Kings of Ireland at Tara, before that famous Bronze Age capital was razed and abandoned in the year 563 A. D. This district, later named Connaught, is the "farthest west" of the Celtic (Indo-European) migrations that seem to have started toward Europe from Asia Minor around 1500 B. C. Because it is such ungrateful rocky country, the various waves of marauders who

approached Ireland from the east and the north did not covet it, and it became the refuge of bands of hardy souls who retired into the mountains of Connemara or out to the islands to escape the invading Danes, Normans, Saxons and their successors. Connaught, and the Aran Islands in particular, have therefore remained the most thoroughly Celtic part of Ireland. The Gaelic language, now recognized as the most archaic of the Indo-European languages now spoken in Europe (the least changed, that is, since the nomadic Celts of antiquity turned their backs on the civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean) has never died out in western Ireland, and the Connaught dialect is considered to be Gaelic (Irish) in its purest form today.

Ocean currents have always favored contact between the Aran Islands, the port of Galway, and parts of the Mediterranean, especially the Iberian Peninsula. One of the marks of an Aran Islander is his kriss, a long narrow belt of brilliant wools still worn today as it has been for centuries by Spaniards, Basques and Portuguese seamen. You may also know an Aran man by the horizontal braided pattern in his knitted pullover, a pattern duplicated exactly on the heavy socks of men from a small district in Denmark -- a reminder of the days when Irish raiders plundered the coasts of Norway and Denmark and were attacked along the Irish Sea in return.

Ireland developed one of the earliest elaborate cultures in Europe, and during the Dark Ages Irish missionaries went to Scandinavia, founded universities in various parts of Europe and studied in Spain and Italy. Students from the continent came also to Irish centers, and there is evidence of contact with Persia during this period. In fact, before St. Patrick's arrival in 432 A. D., groups of adherents of one of the Eastern Orthodox churches are known to have existed in Ireland.

During the centuries of England's struggle to hold Ireland, whenever pressure increased from the eastern side of the island, little groups of stubborn and resentful Irishmen dissolved away into the western mountains, as so often before. They took with them their language, the bardic schools (based like similar traditional schools in the Orient on an elaborate aural training), and their music, all of which they maintained in the face of every repressive measure. The force of the language as a unifying symbol for Irish patriots led to its being proscribed, just as the playing of the harp was, and at one time the teaching of Gaelic was even made a hanging offense. The phrase "a roadside scholar" was then a term of great respect, for it meant that a man had run great risks to learn the language and the poetry of his race, he and his teacher stretched out with their heads together under some hedge. The Gaelic language and its traditions were certainly crippled by generations of official disapproval, and in some quarters they came to be considered a mark of peasant ignorance, admitted to with embarrassment. Today however the trend has been reversed by the Irish Republic: elementary schooling is now conducted nearly everywhere in Irish, Radio Eireann offers regular courses for Irishmen whose schooling was in English, and, particularly in the west, many people confess with reluctance to any knowledge of English. Several Aran Islanders told me with pride: "There has never been much English spoken here."

The alien language did not remain unaffected in Ireland, and Anglo-Irish has developed many vivid turns of speech that are a direct translation of Gaelic locutions, and some of them are common coin today in rural America.

The physical conditions of life for the majority of Aran Islanders are much like those in the Appalachian and Ozarks mountains during the 19th century. The main island has a single good road running nearly from end to end along the landward shore, and dozens of cart tracks criss-cross the rocks between a maze of stone walls. Two-wheel horse-drawn carts are the rule; some people have donkeys and there are a few jaunting cars. The only automobile is a recently-acquired ambulance, although I was assured that there was once another car on the island for a little while. There is a wharf at Kilronan, where the little steamer Dun Aengus discharges goods and picks up cattle and sheep for the mainland; but on the two smaller islands everything must be transhipped from an anchorage in the bay to the beaches in curraghs. These are small canoe-like affairs, still built exactly like the coracles of antiquity except that tar-

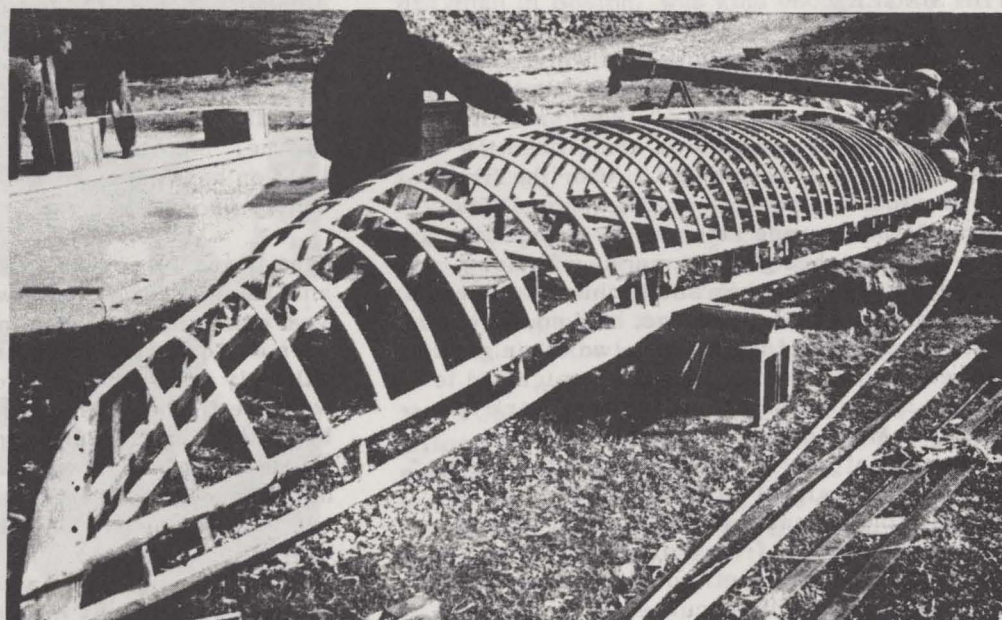
covered canvas has replaced the skins of early Mediterranean use. There is no electricity (except for a small generator at the guest house at Killmurvy) and so no running water nor plumbing on the islands; women recall philosophically "a lifetime of pails."

Contrary to one's first impression, however, many Aran Islanders are as widely travelled as their ancestors ever were, having worked in far parts of the world and then returned from choice to their thatched cottages and to familiar ways that they are proud to know have been little changed for many generations. Everywhere there is immense regard for simplicity and for self-sufficiency and independence, and these qualities would be sacrificed very unwillingly for such amenities as running water and radios, which are enjoyed when met with elsewhere but which on Aran are not considered worth the trouble they would cost. The Irish will complain of themselves that Ireland is "not progressive", but more than most people they act on their conviction that material progress is not everything.

This determined individualism has its price, of course, in a part of Ireland where the bare necessities of life are hard to come by, for any accident may upset a household's economy and scatter its members abroad in search of work, or put them on the dole. There were rueful comments on some Spanish sailors who landed for a few hours at Kilronan, that they were carrying off with them good Irish fish, caught within Ireland's 3-mile limit. But there was always an Irishman to point out that so long as they couldn't catch the fish themselves, there was no reason to begrudge a good catch to the Spaniards "who are men like ourselves, and know what it is to starve." The Spaniards in their yellow oilskins were peddling a little smuggled brandy on the Kilronan streets in the rain -- a time-honored activity.

The island fishermen can't take their own fish because there are only 3 or 4 boats in the islands that are big enough to make a good commercial catch and get it to market in Galway. Fishing from the little bobbing curraghs is difficult and dangerous, though most men catch fish for their families in this way; but the curraghs cannot safely follow the fish as larger boats do. If I mentioned that it would seem that 3 or 4 men might own a fishing boat together and share the catch, the answer was always: "It is better each man for himself," the speaker preferring to wait till he could be master of a boat of his own and hire the help he might need. Every man present concurred in this always, though once a realist in the group

**BUILDING
A CURRAGH
AT INISHMORE**



added: "That'd be the day when bread'll jump into a man's mouth from the mainland and water'll run uphill." I was often reminded of attitudes long familiar among the similarly independent people of mountain regions in the United States, and later I found that the resemblance went further, for the newspapers noted various raids that netted the police a good "catch" of "poteen" (privately distilled liquor) in various parts of Connaught while I was there.

Unlike our mountain country, western Ireland and the Aran Islands are unbelievably bare and stern. No one who saw Man of Aran will ever forget the toilsome building of fields and gardens that is still an everyday affair. Soil is "made" wherever a hollow in the bare rocks will promise to contain it. The "field" is cleared by heaping thousands of loose stones into the low walls that are, with the wide expanse of sea, the most conspicuous feature of the Aran landscape. Then come days of heavy work hauling baskets of seaweed up from the shore whenever the sea brings its "crop" within reach. The seaweed is spread out by hand and covered with sand brought up from the beaches, and I was told that in a year or two the little random-shaped fields started in this way will begin to grow grass for a cow. It takes the work of several seasons to deepen the soil for root vegetables -- the potatoes and turnips that are the Islanders' main reliance for food over the winter.

The terrible famine of the 1840's, when blight made the potatoes "melt into the ground" for 3 successive years, so that half the Gaelic-speaking population of western Ireland died of star-

vation, and half the survivors migrated to England or the United States, is still alive in men's minds. It gave an anxious urgency to the spraying of the potato fields that was going on while I was there, and was several times cited by way of apology for the impossibility of staying to sing as long as I would have liked.

Thanks to the seaweed, which is matchless as fertilizer and regularly used to restore old fields as well as to make new ones, the grazing is excellent if scanty, and the price of Aran cattle at the mainland fairs is second to none in Ireland. Most families own a cow, and her increase is a fairly dependable cash crop, needed to meet the chief problem for which there is no solution on the islands: peat for cooking and winter fires. There are no trees nor peat to be cut anywhere on the three islands, and so each family must buy fuel for the winter while the summer weather allows the Connemara men to bring their boatloads of turf out from the mainland. It is a great expense, and housewives are expert at coaxing a bit of the coals to boil a kettle for tea in the tiny fireplaces, then covering the fire frugally so it will die down until needed again.

While I was there the sea briefly offered another kind of crop: a special variety of seaweed that is boiled to make a thick white pudding and which I have often seen dried and boxed for sale in fish markets in New York. Many people dropped whatever they were doing and went down to fill their baskets along the beaches before the next tide should wash this unexpected bounty away.

THE SINGERS

Most of the songs on this record were sung by Margaret Dirrane, who will be remembered as the leading woman of *Man of Aran*, and by her son Sean, who was a babe in arms when the film was made 25 years ago. After the film's opening took her to London, Boston and New York, Mrs. Dirrane returned to cottage life at Seven Churches on Inishmore, with her elderly husband and her small children. Sean's father died several years ago, and so did one of the daughters of the family; two other girls neither of them yet twenty, have emigrated to an aunt in South Boston, where they work in a factory. Mrs. Dirrane lives sedately, as befits a great lady of the stage in retirement, receiving occasional callers with dignity, as when a famous Japanese actor made the trip all the way to Aran from Italy to salute her. As she was seeing us off on the steamer at Kilronan, it suddenly occurred to this gentleman to ask for her autograph. There was a great scurrying about by five or six people in search of a pencil, and then there seemed no place to rest the paper. Suddenly aware that the steamer was ready to leave and that she was the center of attention, Maggie shook her head, returned the paper and, throwing her big black shawl around her with regal vesture, she bowed to her distinguished visitor with a wave of the hand from the forehead that might have come from an Arab woman. Her warmth of spirit draws many friends, and a woman 30 years older told me: "Maggie's



MARGARET DIRRANE
AT HER COTTAGE DOOR

a perfect mother to me for help and kindness. It was because Mrs. Dirrane and my husband became friends when he played some of his Irish sea music for the film's New York opening, 25 years ago, that she was willing to sing for me. She is as beautiful, at 51, and as light on her feet when it comes to stepping a dance, as she ever was.

Sean Dirrane, now 26, and recently married to an Aran girl (who spent two of the recent war years as a nurse's aide in the sunbaked valley town of Los Banos in central California), sang willingly and gaily for us on our first visit, since we were friends of his mother and obviously loved the songs. But when I returned with my "little black box" it was very hard to persuade him to repeat the songs for recording. It was not only that he was shy, but I came at a very busy time of year, and Sean was hard at work, with 2 other men, "spraying" their potato plants against the blight by means of a furry little native bush that made a good whisk.

The songs were recorded one at a time, whenever Sean came up from the shore to wet his throat with a drop of tea. Sometimes he would face me and with my right hand in his he would swing hands to the rhythm of the song, in the manner of an old and formal tradition that I found among Scottish Gaelic singers on Cape Breton Island in Canada as well. It is a hint of a not-too-distant past when (as still on the Faroe Islands) song and dance were one thing. Usually he liked to stand in his mother's doorway looking out over Galway Bay as he sang, a thin upright figure such as Synge often described, in his high-necked Aran pullover knitted of wool his mother spun, with the practical Island pampooties on his feet, and the Islanders' air of watchful readiness in the face of the sky and the sea.

Pampooties are the traditional Aran slipper, molded to the foot in half-cured skin, and cleverly stitched up the toe and down the heel with a linked cord that can be pulled tight or loosened, to make the slipper fit exactly. Pampooties are ideal for sure-footed moving about on the rocks, but they stiffen when dry, and one sees the men step into pools deliberately to keep them wet and pliable. At night they are put to soak in water until needed in the morning. Aran cottages are gay with music and poetry when a casual gathering of friends turns into a *ceilidh* (pronounced kay-lee). This is an informal, often spontaneous occasion when each person in the room will "offer a little something" -- a song, a step-dance, a bit on harmonica, fiddle or accordion, a tale of a



BRIDGET MULLIN SINGING

recent happening or a very old one, a poem recited by an old man or a child. Several times I overheard, from outside the door, a wonderful singer who was a relative of the Dirranes. We talked often together about many things, but he never sang when he knew I was within hearing, nor would he record, although I was happy to follow Maggie's suggestion that I bring along a little something "to give him two hearts," since he proved to be "such a very scarce (shy) man with a song."

Mrs. Kate Faherty sang a couple of years ago for Radio Eireann and received so many compliments on her pretty voice that she has been learning songs from visitors, teachers, and any place else that she can. (She has one of the few battery-run radios on the island, protected from the damp air by a fitted tea-cozy.) She had great expectations of the opportunities she mistakenly thought I could offer, and her singing-style is as concert-like as she could make it. However, the lullaby I was able to use on the record is beautiful, and a traditional one. Her "tune for going around the house" was *Way Up on Old Smoky*, -- a far cry from Bascom Lunsford who first put this song into circulation from North Carolina.

I spent a fine afternoon in the pub run by Mr. and Mrs. Fitz in Killeany, where Mr. William Costello, lately retired to his native village on Inishmore after a long career as teamster and

drayman in Boston, was kind enough to act as host. There I met with every kind assistance. A white cloth was respectfully spread over the bar for my microphone, and 5 or 6 men continued with singing that had begun before I came in. "God gifted me with little, only the talent for singing," one of the men said to me. Mr. Costello's generosity was somewhat overpowering, and very soon the songs began to sound "too wet". "I can sing all right on porter," one man told me regretfully when his friends politely suggested that he should stop, "but with whiskey the words do leave me."

Miles Joyce of Killeany, a vigorous red-headed fellow, who was introduced to me as "a fisherman in good standing" and who was just in off one of the big fishing boats, and dead for sleep, contributed generously from the great store of songs he has in his head.

In the evening Mrs. Peg Flaherty very kindly came to Mr. Costello's house to sit by the fire and sing, when her long day's work was done. She was too tired to think of more than 2 or 3 of the innumerable songs he undoubtedly knows, and she made the familiar remark: "If only I was at the cow, now, or in the garden, there'd be songs enough'd come to my mind."

Bridget Mullin was born in 1868, and many people mentioned her to me as the leading professional keening woman of the islands. She will be remembered by many who saw the film. She is a relative of Kathleen Mullin Dirrane, wife of Sean Dirrane, and is being cared for in their cottage. An accident crippled her badly a year or two ago, since when she dreams away the time. But she was able to sing fragments of songs for me in her strong old voice, and when I asked her if she could sing the *Caoine* for me she began to tell over a long series of family tragedies: her father, her husband, her brothers and her sons all dead in Ireland or America, "crying them" with the age-old ritualistic plaint as she thought of each in turn.

Another woman also did the "wailing" or "crying" so I could hear it, but first she went round the house to peer up and down the road, and then she barred the door against unexpected callers, before sitting down by the hearth: "This will be just for a whisper between you and me." When later she agreed to record it, because she understood its importance, she asked that she be not named, so that her relatives in Ireland and America need not know that she had done it. It is of course risking bad luck to "wail" or "cry" at random what is a solemn ceremonial expression of grief, and one's re-

latives might well be alarmed at it. But I gathered there was also some question of presumption, since "crying the dead" is a professional thing, for which mourners are brought in from outside the family connection, and are paid.

When I played the two recordings of the Caoine for the Gaelic Society in New York, several people were overcome by it, and I was myself inclined to feel it was too intimate and too disturbing a thing to issue on a record for general sale. A few people agreed with this when I raised the question, but the objections seemed to be due chiefly to the fear that something at once so archaic and so profoundly felt would seem only amusing to the uninitiated, thus doing Irish culture less than justice. Many more, however, felt that the Caoine is Ireland, a window into antiquity, and that those who know Irish literature are familiar with the word and the practise and should know how it actually sounds. When one man said: "Why that one recording has all Irish history in it!" I felt I had no right to withhold it. The singers agreed that I might use it if I thought it would be heard with respect.

THE SONGS

These are songs commonly sung in homes and pubs when I spent two weeks on Inishmore in June, 1955, selected for the interest and beauty of their melodies and their singing styles. The music lies very close behind much of the folk music of the United States. Not only have Celtic melodic styles penetrated our song and dance tunes, but actual melodies still sung in western Ireland with Gaelic texts can be found in the northern United States, used with topical lumberjack and miners' song-texts and all sorts of other songs in English; and innumerable fiddle tunes are played and named alike in both countries. The song Maggie Dirrane sings in English is a favorite in the southern Appalachians, in versions closely related in both text and tune. Its A-B-B-A form (4 phrases of equal length, with the B phrases at a higher pitch-level than the A's) is the conventional comeallie form found in dozens of Irish ballads of the 19th century, and in many earlier English ones. Several of the Gaelic songs on the record have the same musical form. For the most part, however these songs are not tales of action as the English ballads are, but are poetic reflection, exhortation or commentary, in a quite different spirit. They may be based on actual events, but seldom report them dramatically and completely.

The astonishing melismas (several tones to a syllable), which had nearly disappeared in the United States when I began recording traditional music twenty years ago, and which are superbly exemplified in the singing of Sean Dirrane, were a commonplace of concert singing in the 18th century, deliberately learned and often described. From sophisticated musical circles there may well have been some influence on the oral tradition. But it seems more likely to me that, at least in the west of Ireland, such singing was a long-established folk style, inherited from a singing style once widespread throughout the Mediterranean.

However that may be, as sung today the vocal arabesques are not fixed, but are added spontaneously to a tune skeleton, and they vary considerably from performer to performer, from stanza to stanza and to a lesser degree from performance to performance. With the older singers they often grow more elaborate, with more decorative notes between the notes of the tune, as the song goes on and the singing increases in intensity and excitement. I have no idea how common this is, but I heard it perhaps half a dozen times. This has a parallel in the very old Celtic theme-and-variations style of the bagpipes, the pibroch. It is of interest to note that one of the terms used on Aran for singing is casad, a Gaelic word for a twist, a turn or a coil. (This is applied usually to what we know as lilting, the multi-syllabic "mouth music for dancing" for which the general term is port a beal, and with which Side A of the record begins.)

Most of the texts of these songs can be traced to 18th or 19th century Irish poetry, but they have, I am told, suffered the losses of lines or stanzas, the hybridization with other songs, and the general disassembly and recombination of parts that we in the United States take for granted as a result of oral transmission. The tunes seem far older. In a country like Ireland where the poetry and song of an old and elaborate culture was transmitted orally for hundreds of years, and in which (as in the Asiatic cultures today) training was directed toward the memory and the ear rather than toward literacy in the modern sense, this divergence from the original creator's intention is not considered a virtue. It is still common practice for singers to refer their songs back to those in the community with the best memories from time to time. In America, on the other hand, our confidence in the new and the individual seems to have led us to welcome variation, so that we have developed great interest in the whole process of variation, which we think of as an un-

conscious selection that produces regional styles. The modifications that occur in the course of oral transmission seem a natural re-creation to us, and we even come to prefer their simplifications, -- something very hard for an Irish scholar to understand. He knows and admires the original text, and sees no reason why it should be allowed to change.

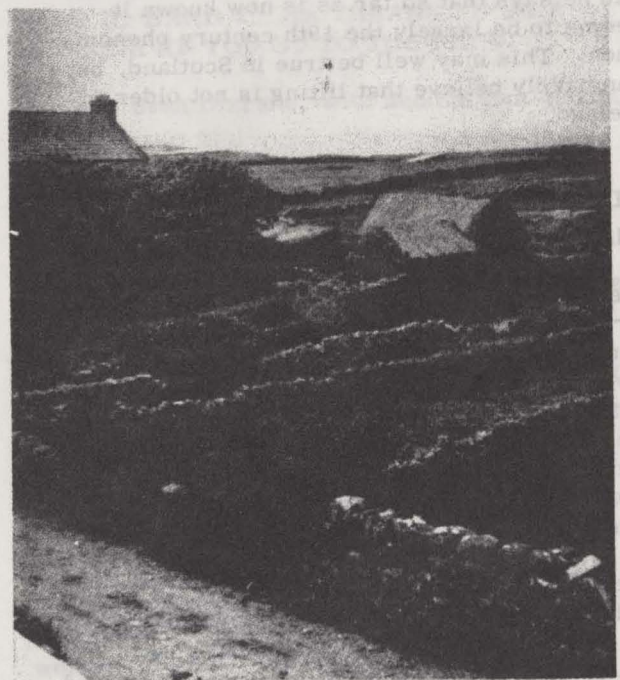
Proof of the esteem in which a well-trained memory is held in Ireland came my way in unexpected form when songs were going around a group one afternoon, and I joined in when my turn came, and then forgot my song in the middle. Mr. Costello gracefully saved face for me (not personally, but in my role as representative of American culture) by standing up to say that many people in the United States were able to sing songs all the way through, and long ones too: he'd heard them himself. The fine tact of his comment was only apparent to me after I had had a little time to think it over.

I am indebted for the fortunate opportunity to make these recordings to BBC in London, which loaned me one of their beautifully designed little EMI battery-run tape recorders, at the instigation of Maud Karpeles and the International Folk Music Council. Occasional dropping of the pitch is due less to the singers than to the fact that the EMI is battery-driven, which makes occasional variation in speed inevitable. The change in volume at the end of the songs is due to a convention of singing at a ceilidh: the singer bows, head almost to knees, as the song ends. Since the microphone was usually in my lap as I sat facing the singer, this was in effect bowing into the microphone. Seamus Ennis made the selections for BBC use and the tapes were copies and sent on to me with his most helpful comments. Other help has come from several people, notably Dr. John P. Hughes of Columbia University and Mr. Joseph Davitt of New York, who made the O'Malley collection available to me, among others, for textual comparison. A full transcription and translation of the texts has not been possible to provide, but we hope it may be in the future.

It is thanks to the courtesy of Mrs. Robert Flaherty, the Flaherty Foundation and the Museum of Modern Art, that we are allowed to use some of the still photographs made on Aran during work on the film; those used here might almost have been made last year. I was enabled to take others myself through the great kindness of a perfect stranger, a family photographer in Galway who, when he heard I was trying without success to rent a camera, insisted on lending me one of his that he did not need at the moment.

The Gaelic revival has of course encouraged the learning of traditional Gaelic songs by schools and other groups, and Seamus Ennis pointed out that many of the songs I recorded were the identical versions (as to text, but seldom as to tune apparently) that have been published with school circulation in view. None of these songs can have been learned in this way, although some of them may have come from people who did. As Mrs. Dirrane's elder sister sang for a Dublin collector "before the two wars" I think it is as likely that the songs taught in schools came from these singers or their friends, as the other way around, but the prevalent feeling among the singers themselves that a song has a proper version, which one should take over from the best singer in a community if one can, certainly acts to check individual variation, and I do not at present see how our questions about this can be answered.

However, it is a fact that Douglas Hyde's Love Songs of Connaught, and the collections of Thomas O'Malley and Mrs. Senator Costello of Tuam contain most of these texts with surprisingly little variation except for lacunae. Some of the tunes are to be found in Petrie's Complete Collection of Ancient Irish Music (1855).



VIEW FROM THE GUEST HOUSE
AT KILARNEY, ON INISHMORE

SONGS OF ARAN

Notes on songs

SIDE I, BAND 1, a and b: LILTING. BEÍDH RÍL AGAINN (WE WILL HAVE A REEL).

This is a well-known bit of the port-a-beál, ("mouth music for dancing") but in this case Mrs. Dirrane is just using it as "a song for going around the house", with no attempt to maintain the unflagging rhythm that is required when the lilting is done for dancing. Pamphlet No. IV of An Claisceadal, (traditional songs selected by Colm O'Lochlainn, with tonic sol-fa notation, designed for use in schools) gives 2 stanzas and refrain as Maggie sings them here; but she has a second part of the tune that is omitted in the published version.

Seán Dirrane then lilted two tunes while Pat Wallace does some step-dancing: The Ten-Penny Bit and Smash the Windows. This non-sense-syllable music is certainly a substitute for instruments, but it did not result from a religious prohibition as play-party games did in the United States. James Ross, at the School of Scottish Studies of the University of Edinburgh, believes it may have been the invention of bagpipe players who wished to keep their tunes alive when the instruments were proscribed on account of their nationalist associations, and he says that so far as is now known it seems to be largely the 19th century phenomenon. This may well be true in Scotland, but I can hardly believe that lilting is not older in Ireland.

SIDE I, BAND 2: MÁIRE STÁNTON (MARY STANTON).

A song in praise of the charm of a chance-met girl, who is compared to Helen of Troy, to Venus and to Mary Brown (the singer's last love) to the disadvantage of all of them. "There is the love of hundreds to the forehead of her face . . . and the twists of hair sweeping after her up the path. . . A man close to such a jewel would not envy the power of Alexander or of Samson. . . ."

The text is by the blind poet Raftery, (d. 1835), and except for a transposition in the order of the 2 halves of the 5th stanza, Seán sings it nearly word for word as Mrs. Costello printed it (1923) in her Tuam collection (where she completed it from Douglas Hyde's earlier publication of the poems of Raftery). Seán's tune

is not the one she found associated with this text, but she publishes a close relative (especially in its second strain) for the song about Máire ní Éidhin (Mary Hynes, No. 56).

SIDE I, BAND 3:

A song in praise of a Captain George O'Malley who skippered a boat on some epic voyage. Seán sings the first 3 stanzas of the 5 printed by Thomas O'Malley in Amráin Chláinne Gaedhel, p. 139.

SIDE I, BAND 4: AMHRÁN NA TRÁGHA BÁINE (SONG OF TRABANE).

A widely-known song believed to have been composed (after she moved to Boston) by the sister of 3 brothers who were drowned off Trabane in the islands of south Connemara.

SIDE I, BAND 5: 'T WAS EARLY, EARLY IN THE SPRING.

Sung by Mrs. Dirrane in her beautiful Anglo-Irish as she learned it 35 years ago from her elder sister. See the many versions in Cecil Sharp's Appalachian Collections.

SIDE I, BAND 6: ÓRÓ MHÍLE GRÁDH (ORO, MY THOUSAND TREASURES).

A refrain and tune for which verses are customarily improvised; dozens of stanzas exist.

Seamus Ennis says this is a herding song, but several people referred to it as "a song for farewells" also, and Mrs. Dirrane explained to me: "When the people used to be going to America, like, there used to be waiting at the ships. . . and the people that'd be on the shore, they'd sing that. . . Let you be thinking of them that's far away, your family all going from you, and you'd sing that. Alone, or in company, you'd sing that."

SIDE I, BAND 7: AN CAILÍN FEARAMHAIL FÍONN (THE FAIR BRAVE GIRL).

Sung by Miles Joyce, who sat with his hand over his eyes at one end of Fitz' bar in Killeany, with other men on a bench along the wall offering occasional comment and encouragement.

As listening gypsies exclaim "Olé!" in their enthusiasm, so one of Mr. Joyce's friends exclaims "Dia leat!" (God be with you, -- that is: Power to you, or Good for you!) and Mr. Joyce's singing takes on new energy. Mr. Costello considered this unsuitable on a record and his shush-ing of the men (and my shushing of him) can be heard on the record, along with the occasional hissing when mugs of porter (dark ale) were drawn from the tap, and the clink of coins on the bar.

SIDE I, BAND 8: SAGART NA CUILE BÁINE
(THE PRIEST OF COOLBAWN).

Sung by Miles Joyce, a song in praise of a much-beloved priest. The last 2 words mean "of the white hair" and Seamus Ennis believes they describe the priest in question. O'Malley suggests (p. 120 of the collection cited) that they refer to Cúil Bhán, a small place in County Mayo near a waterfall.

SIDE I, BAND 9: A SHEÁIN A MHIC MO
CHOMHARSAN (O JOHN, SON OF MY
NEIGHBOR)

Sung by Miles Joyce. "If you are going to marry, take my advice and pick the right woman..."

This provoked much glee among the men gathered around, and one of them said to me: "If you knew what he is after singing to you, you would not be here." I was reminded of another Irishman who, when I apologized for keeping him waiting, told me: "It's no matter at all. The longer you was gone, the sooner I knew you'd be coming back."

According to Mr. Davitt, this text has some stanzas from each of 2 versions in Ceál na n'Oileán (Michael O'Croidhin, 1931) pp. 87 and 89, plus at least 2 other stanzas and some unclear bits. Nos. 1437 and 1438 in Petrie's Complete Collection are related tunes under this same title, the second of which he took down in Galway. (No date, but other tunes from Galway bear the dates 1840 and 1854).

SIDE II, BAND 1: AN DROIGHNEAN DONN
(THE BLACKTHORN).

Sung by Seán Dirrane. "My Love is like the sloe-blossom on the blackthorn bush."

This is certainly one of the best-loved songs in the west of Ireland -- everyone I met wanted to be sure I had it. It has acquired many different stanzas over the years, and has been published many times by collectors. Donal O'Sullivan's brilliant little book on Irish folk music gives his poetic English translation of 10 stanzas, and Mrs. Costello prints 2 versions. Sean begins with a stanza common to several versions, and 3 of his 4 stanzas are printed by O'Malley (p. 127); but a 4th has not been located in print.

Usually the singer seems to be a girl: "Though now you are going from me, may you surely return safely, for there's no doubt but that you have murdered the heart within my breast. I have no skiff to send, nor a boat after you: the sea is in flood between us, and I never learned to swim." A line in which she says, in O'Sullivan's translation: "There's many thinking when I'm drinking that I am surely theirs" has given this song the name of a drinking song. Other lines suggest that the texts have crossed with versions conceived as a dialogue complaint, or as a man's song entirely.

Mrs. Costello's tunes are quite different from the one sung here, but the Petrie Collection (1855) has one under the title "The blackthorn, correctly set" that is almost identical. (No. 451, with no date nor place identified.)

SIDE II, BAND 2: MÁ THÉANN TÚ'UN A
AONAIGH (IF YOU GO TO THE FAIR).

Sung by Sean Dirrane, with audible foot-tapping.

SIDE II, BAND 3: PEIGÍ MISTEÁL
(PEGGY MITCHELL)

Is a poem by Raftery, a man's praise of his beloved, sung by Seán Dirrane.

Many of the same poetic comparisons, and certain of the same lines, are to be found also in Máire Stanton and elsewhere, having become part of a fund of love-sung commonplace, treasured for age and familiarity where invention serves no useful purpose. "Until I go into the grave my thought is with you, O Peggy, my thousand loves... My grief and my loss that you are not, and I with you, at the harbours of America My love twice over are the women forever."

Mrs. Costello publishes an 8 stanza text which she says has been completed from Douglas Hyde's published Songs of Raftery, and which

is almost identical with Seán Dirrane's text, except that stanzas 5 and 6 have been cut in half and combined into one. Seán learned this from a famous singer on Aran, now dead.

SIDE II, BAND 4: BEAN A' LEANNA
(THE ALE WOMAN).

Sung by Sean Dirrane.

Ennis considers this a very fine example of Aran singing, and I believe it to represent the oldest singing style now found on Aran. The tune is a variant of "Pretty Girl Milking Her Cow," well known in the United States from Irish collections. The text seems to be an assembly of bits from many other songs, as is usual when a song is much liked and widely circulated without reference to a primary source.

SIDE II, BAND 5: AMHRÁN AN TÉI
(SONG OF THE TEA).

Sung by Mrs. Dirrane with pauses in the rhythm as when spinning.

Seán told me that his mother uses many different songs for spinning, "all she knows when the work is long." This is a dialogue between husband and wife; she is forever lamenting the lack of tea in the house and him as a poor provider, and he complains that hard as he works, his wife does not think to keep a bit of tobacco at hand for him in the house. (Costello collection, p. 45, has several of the same stanzas and a related tune.)

SIDE II, BAND 6: AN TUÍRNÍN LÍN
(THE FLAX SPINNING WHEEL).

This is a song Mrs. Dirrane often uses for spinning, but she considers her son sings it better, so it is sung by Seán Dirrane, (without the customary pauses required by the work, since men do not spin).

It is a song in the mouth of a man who complains that his lazy wife can't put in a good day's work even seated at the spinning wheel. It is sung all over Ireland, and is to be found in most school collections -- Dunaire Gaedilge, for instance, gives the 3 stanzas sung here, (Vol. I).

SIDE II, BAND 7:

Mrs. Dirrane croons as she does to quiet the

cow for milking, and then she goes into an onomatopoetic song that accompanies (and imitates) the sound of the stream of milk in the pail: "An tsín, an tsín, an tsín-a-nín nín" -- a series of vocables.

The tune is with her as with other women used interchangeably to quiet cows and children (see her singing of a lullaby on 9-b). When she first sang this for my husband and myself, she began with a quite different bit, some kind of religious text, -- obviously an old charm. I tried not to show undue interest in it, but I could never get her to repeat it for my "black box."

SIDE II, BAND 8: DO-EEN DO A-DIDDLE AM
(VOCABLES).

Used by Mrs. Dirrane as a "quiet song for sleep" and by others as a lullaby; Seamus Ennis says it is also a herding song.

SIDE II, BAND 9: THREE LULLABIES.

a.) THOBHÁ MO LEANBH (HUSH-O, MY CHILD).
Sung by Kate Faherty. (Cf. Petrie Complete Collection (1855), no. 1016, -- 2nd strain is nearly identical.)

b.) SEÓ-THÍN SEÓ.
(vocables common to Gaelic lullabies in general), sung by Mrs. Dirrane.

c.) SEÓ-THÍN SEÓ, 'S TÚ MO LEANBH
(HUSH-A-BYE, YOU'RE MY LITTLE ONE).
Sung by Peg Flaherty.

One of the men present, famous as "a very long man on a word or a song" thought she sang this too fast, and so did I. But when I asked her to recall the feel of the cradle as she rocked it, she kept the same speed, and I subsequently found that other women sang lullabies at a pace that seemed hasty to me.

SIDE II, BAND 10: CAOINEADH NA MARBH
(Caoine, pronounced keen, for the dead).

This is the "Irish cry", as the Caoine was called in the 17th century by those who heard it from women searching for their men on the battlefields of Ireland. There are several traditional phrases for it, each with many repetitions of the words Och, Ochone (Woe, woe!). This was recorded by a woman who wishes her name not used. The words here are: "Alas, grief, grief, at night and in the morning...."

It is improvised to a degree, in the order and number of repetitions of the phrases, but the melodic line which begins high and ends low in pitch with words more spoken than sung, and the free prose rhythms, are the mark of the old style.

It is rarely heard anywhere now, partly because many priests disapprove of it as too pagan a thing; I was several times assured that it had died out entirely, but I heard it myself on the mainland.

The traditional moments for sounding the Caoine are (by members of the family) when death first occurs, and then (by professional keening women) as the body leaves the house for the last time, and again at the graveside. Apparently it is also sometimes heard in church as the coffin is taken up.

Funeral processions on Aran maintain another very old custom; each mourner steps off the road to gather a stone which he adds to a pile of stones in a field near the cemetery. These heaps of stones have been undisturbed for generations, apparently. The reason I was given for this individual ceremony is that each mourner contributes in this way to keeping evil down in the world, -- a communal weighting down of the Devil, as it were. Someone listening to this explanation said: "Now wouldn't it be a fine thing if that was all we had to do to keep the Devil where he belongs and out of this world!" At various points along island roads one also sees more formally constructed stone monuments, standing higher than a man's head, topped by a cross and with a memorial tablet like a gravestone. These are not grave markers, but a memorial (most often for men lost at sea) that require a prayer from the passer-by, and no one ever goes by them without making the sign of the Cross.

The Caoine is often called a lament, but James Ross, in his article outlining a classification for Gaelic song, points out that a lament is a more

elaborate and personal expression of loss, usually done by the bereaved. An expression of loss, a description of grief. It does not have the ritual character of the Caoine, nor does it tell over the virtues of the deceased as the poetic elegies do. I heard such a lament from a woman sitting at the door of a roadside cottage with her head covered with her shawl, near Lisdoonvarna in County Clare. It went on for half an hour, with no one else near.

SIDE II, BAND 11: CAOINEADH NA MARBH
(CAOINE FOR THE DEAD).

"Cried" by Bridget Mullin.

This is a ritual (and tearless) crying-out against grief and death in the world, and it goes back into time as far as anything we know.

Mrs. Mullin had 3 different forms for the Caoine: they are strung together here without the long tales of family tragedy that she told in between. The second Caoine is unfortunately incomplete, as I had stopped the machine and she began the wailing too suddenly for me to catch the first phrase. Because of its ritualistic aspect, the women charged with this duty to the dead are conscientious about learning it, and about passing it on in its proper form.

I am told a similar ritual is found in other Celtic enclaves in the Balkans, and about 1938 I heard a similar ceremonial among the Molekani (Russians from near Van in Armenia, in Asia Minor) in San Francisco, when a young woman had been murdered and a half-dozen mourners (who were not members of the family) knelt and beat their heads on the floor as they wailed in much this way, the congregation sitting around with the women covering their heads with their shawls.

I am very grateful that these two women consented to help me preserve the actual sound of the Caoine, for it was very difficult for them to bring themselves to do it.

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