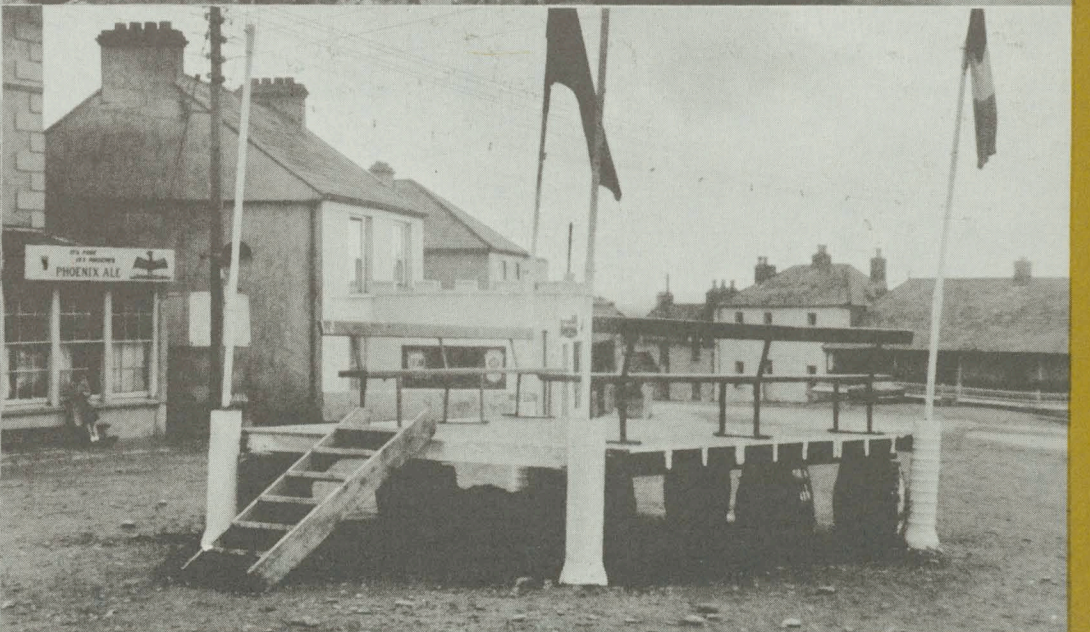
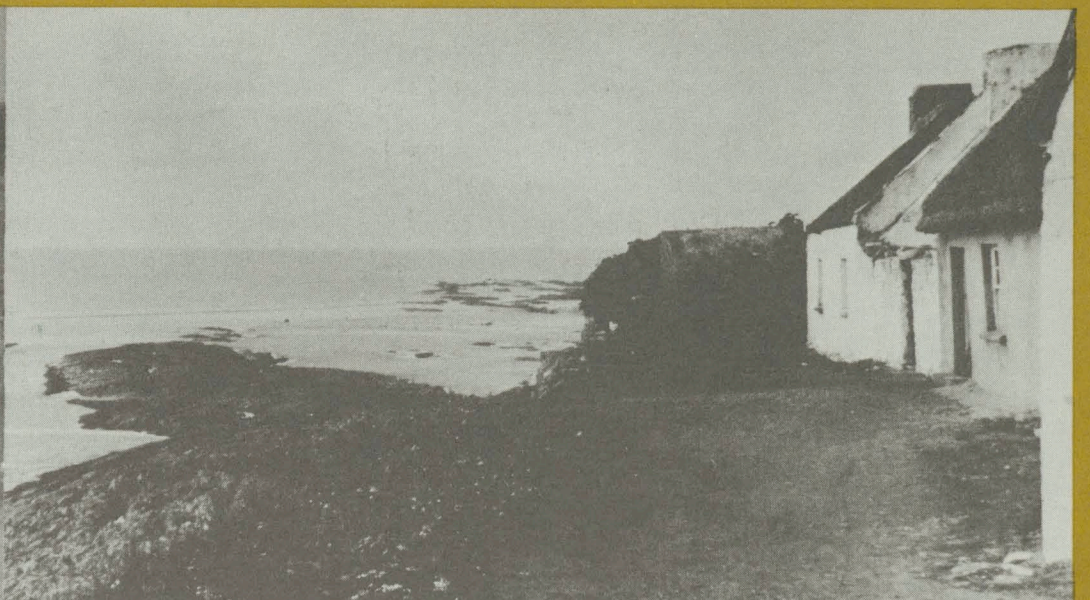


Traditional Music of Ireland

Volume 2: Songs and Dances from Down, Kerry, and Clare / Folkways Records FW 8782

Recorded in Down, Galway, Connemara, Clare, and Kerry by Samuel B. Charters, technical assistance by A. R. Danberg



M
1744
T763
1963
v.2

MUSIC LP

Traditional Music of Ireland

Folkways Records FW 8782

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SIDE I

- Band 1. Conversation in the Irish Language
- Band 2. DUN AN OIR
Seán de Hird - vocal
- Band 3. THE RAMBLING KERRY LAD (English)
Bridget Granhill - vocal
- Band 4. PHEAB SAN OL
Seán de Hird - vocal
- Band 5. LULLABIES
Bridget Granhill - vocal
- Band 6. HARVEST HOME (hornpipe)
Seán de Hird - accordion
- Band 7. THE TURFMAN FROM ARDEE
A. PUS IN COUNTY DOWN
David Harper - vocal
- Band 8. THE ROSE OF ARAMMORE
Sam Allen - vocal

SIDE II

- Band 1. RAKES OF KILDAIR (lig)
- Band 2. RAKISH PAIDY (Reel)
- Band 3. THE SWEETS (hornpipe)
- Band 4. O'PRETTY'S GRAVE (Slow air)
Denis Murphy - violin
- Band 5. THE DEAR IRISH BOY (slow air)
Willie Clancy - Uilleann Pipes
- Band 6. BLACK IS THE COLOR OF MY LOVED
ONE'S HAIR
Willie Clancy - tin whistle
- Band 7. THE SHAKESONE and NAME FORGOTTEN
(Reel & lig)
Willie Clancy - tin whistle
- Band 8. THE MOUNTAIN ROAD (Reel)
Denis Murphy - violin

TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF IRELAND

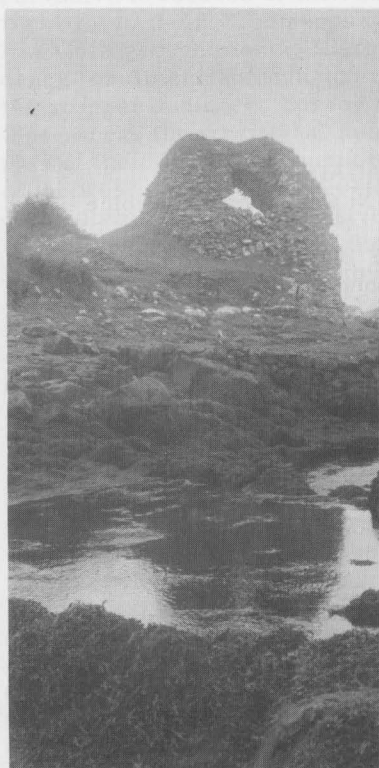
Collected, Recorded, and Edited by Samuel B. Charles

Volume I

The Older Traditions of Connemara and Clare

Volume II

Songs and Dances from Down, Kerry, and Clare



M
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MUSIC LP

TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF IRELAND

VOLUME ONE - THE OLDER TRADITIONS OF CONNEMARA AND CLARE

SIDE ONE

- Band 1: SAMBO ESRA
Maire Aine Ni Dhonnchadha - voice
- Band 2: A STOR MO CHAOR (English)
Sean 'Ac Donnca - voice
- Band 3: THE ROCKS OF BOURNE (slow air)
Willie Clancy-Uilleann Pipes
- Band 4: TRIP O'ER THE MOUNTAIN (slow air)
Willie Clancy-Uilleann Pipes
- Band 5: THE GYPSY-O (English)
Maire Aine Ni Dhonnchadha - voice
- Band 6: LIAM O RAOFAILLE
Sean 'Ac Donnca - voice

SIDE TWO

- Band 1: DEAS AN SAGAIRTIN
Maire Aine Ni Chonnchadha - voice
- Band 2: THE BONNY BOY (English)
Sean 'Ac Donnca - voice
- Band 3: THE QUEEN OF O'DONNELL (slow air)
Denis Murphy - violin
- Band 4: UNA BHAN
Maire Aine Ni Dhonnchadha - voice

Maire Aine Ni Dhonnchadha was recorded at Furbo,
Spiddal, County Galway, October 21, 1960. Sean
'Ac Donnca was recorded at Ahascragh, County Galway,
October 20, 1960.

TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF IRELAND

Samuel B. Charters

At the edge of a shadowed, dark lake in the west of County Clare there is the crumbling ruin of a medieval abbey. In a mist covered valley in the west of Kerry is a line of stone marking the walls of a monastery. A ruined turret stands wet and brooding along a dirt road in the rough hills of Galway. The west of Ireland is haunted with the ruins of an ancient past. From the centers of monastic learning on the bleak coast of Kerry came the priests who carried the cross of Christ to the savage north of Europe. In the castles and abbeys flourished a rich culture of literature and music. Now there are ruins, their stones carried away to build small farm buildings, their gaunt walls staring across the wet fields with the vacant eye of crumbling windows. The rutted track to the edge of a stone filled lake stops at silent, ruined walls at the water's edge.

The west of Ireland has declined as Ireland itself has declined. The centuries of English domination seem to have taken from Ireland some of its very consciousness of being, and even more than disestablishment was some spirit working in the people of Ireland that seemed to take from them their initiative and enterprise. Even more deleterious than the English has been the stream of emigration away from the farms to the cities, and away from the cities to the United States and England. Not only the poor farm people

facing a potatoe famine, but the men of intelligence and wit. The literature of England has been enriched with the Irishmen - Sheriden, Wilde, Shaw, Goldsmith - who chose to live away from their own country. A James Joyce flees Ireland and through its struggles for independence does not lift his voice or pen in a gesture of help. The countryside and the cities are stripped of the ambitious, the courageous, and the imaginative.

But as the people have left the gray, misted country to the west they have not taken the culture with them. In the poor farms of Connemara the older songs are still sung, along the coast of Clare there are still the older dance tunes, and in the headlands of the Kerry Coast there are still gatherings of a Saturday night for singing and music. The culture of Ireland still lives, even in a countryside dotted with ruins and marked with cart tracks leading nowhere. The cities themselves have developed their own culture. The singing of an Ireland remembered by the emigrant as he stands in a dingy pub thinking of the home and the girl he left behind. This has become a tradition, too, which lives in Ireland. The sentimental voice in a strange city and the impassioned voice of a Kerry turfman are part of the Irish tradition which still lives, even as the country itself seems to hesitate in the ruins of a troubled past. In this tradition is Ireland's present, and in the deepest sense, Ireland's future.

In recent years there has been a growing awareness in Ireland of the richness of Irish traditional music. In the gaeltacht areas - the Irish speaking areas -

of Kerry and Galway the older traditions have still a vitality and self-consciousness that has resisted the pervasive influences of the radio and the phonograph record. In the record shops of the larger towns, like Galway or Limerik, there is a discouraging tendency for American rock and roll records to reach the younger audience, but for the mature people in these areas the traditional music is still a living part of their lives. Connemara, the gaeltacht area of the west of Galway, has retained not only the older songs, but the older styles of singing, and it is in this area that some of the finest singing in Ireland may be heard. The singing style is one of restraint and intense subtlety, with a high degree of melodic ornamentation. It is a style of great difficulty for anyone who has not grown up in Connemara, but a singer from one of these western villages often reaches a level of brilliant artistry.

Among the best known of the Connemara singers, Sean 'Ac Donnca, who was born in 1919 in the village of Carna, is widely regarded as one of the finest living singers in the Irish tradition. He has had considerable success in competitions in Dublin, and was included in the series of recordings released in Ireland by the football lottery, Gael-Linn. Maire Aine Ni Dhonnchadha, from the village of An Cnoc, is as highly regarded for the purity and emotional warmth of her singing. Their music is an expression of the most vital strain of the older Irish traditions.

The countryside around the village of Ahascragh, where Sean 'Ac Donnca lives, is low, hedgerowed pastureland. It is to the east of Connemara, out of the Irish speaking area, and his neighbors use his English name, Johnny McDonough. He is the principal of the local school, a two room building not far from his home. As he walks along the road from his house children hurry to walk beside him, and he usually is surrounded by his pupils by the time he has reached the school building. Ahascragh is a small village, and the number of pupils is not large, but they come to the school with a seriousness and determination to learn. The boys usually dress in ties and coats, and the girls are in carefully ironed dresses. Although his work as a teacher takes much of his time Mr. McDonough has continued to sing at every opportunity, and still enters the yearly singing competitions at Dublin. Often during his summer holidays he travels to Connemara to learn new songs, and his repertoire is continually growing. One of the songs on this recording, A STOR MO CHAOR, is from a trip he made to the western islands of Ireland in the summer of 1960. His singing has a sensitivity and expressiveness that has gained him the respect of traditional singers in every part of Ireland.

Maire Aine Ni Dhonnchadha, like Mr. McDonough, is a teacher. For a number of years she worked in Dublin, but she has recently married Mr. Sean McMahon and is living with her husband in the small village of Furbo, on the Galway Coast. Although her marriage has taken her away from the competitions of Dublin she is again living in Connemara, and she is able to hear and learn many of the older songs which are rapidly disappearing. Furbo is only a few miles from her childhood home of An Cnoc. The land

along the coast is almost untillable; a rough group of hills strewn with rocks. The people have piled the rocks up into lines of wall, but there is room for little more than small pieces of pastureland, wet and uneven, a few sheep cropping the heavy grass. Mr. and Mrs. McMahon live on Galway Bay, in a small house not far from the rocky beach. The surrounding countryside is dotted with stone farm buildings, the roof thatch hanging in a ragged line over the walls of the buildings. Often the plaster coating covering the house walls are painted in bright shades of blue or yellow, but most of the house walls are painted white, and they stand out against the dark colors of the landscape. Mrs. McMahon's neighbors often sing together on Saturday nights, and she was immediately accepted into their group. Her singing has a sweetness and delicacy that is ideally suited to the music of Connemara.

The songs of Sean 'Ac Donnca and Maire Aine Ni Dhonnchadha are from the oldest surviving Irish traditions. Although most of the singing in Connemara is in the Irish language nearly every singer knows a few English songs and these songs have been altered melodically to such an extent that they are almost part of the Irish tradition. Not only has there been melodic alteration, but the ornamentation of the Connemara style has been fitted to the English song, giving it a musicality that is usually not to be found in an English performance of the same song. THE GYPSY-O, sung by Maire Dhonnchadha, is an early version of the well known song often called THE BLACK JACK GYPSY. She sings it to the same melody as the Irish song DEAS AN SAGAIRTIN, altering the ornamentation to suit the text. Her version is of great beauty, concluding with a seldom heard verse that expresses the woman's determination to stay with her gypsy lover, even if she has to ". . . drink the dew."

Both of Mr. McDonough's songs in English are of considerable interest. A STOR MO CHAOR, which he learned in the western islands in the summer of 1960, is often sung at the wake that is held for a person emigrating to the United States, in the hope that the song will dissuade him from leaving. The neighbors gather the night before the person is to leave and there is a last evening of singing and music. A STOR MO CHAOR means "Darling of My Heart", and the song is a poignant one. The melody has some of the characteristics of the late nineteenth century art song, with its difficult interval relationships and extended range. The other song in English, THE BONNY BOY, is similar in style to the older THE GYPSY-O, and shows clearly the mingling of Irish and English musical elements. Mr. McDonough learned the song on Baffin Island when he was a boy of fifteen. Although the song has many of the elements of the older styles the words mention returning the boy to "college" for another year after he has been married, which would seem to be a later reference. There is, however, the verse,

" . . . And all around his bonnet we will tie a ribbon blue,
To let the ladies know that he's married. . . "

setting the song back into an earlier period.

The first Irish song, SAMBO ESRA, is in some respects similar to the spinning songs of the Hebrides. It is a play song which Maire Dhonnchadha learned from her mother. The girl sings, "Go East and West and get me a husband . . ." and someone answers with a the name of a boy in the village. The girl replies "I won't even touch him," giving for a reason that ". . . his shirt is in rags." After several boys are mentioned she is finally asked who she will have as a husband and she sings "I will have as a husband a man with a gold whip in his hand and he King of Ireland."

LIAM O RAOFAILLE is a well known song along the western coast of Ireland. The title of the song is the name "Willy Reilly" in Irish. The song is often known as "The Virgin Widow," and was supposedly composed as a lament by the woman who was left a widow on her wedding night. Her new husband, Willie Reilly, was drowned as he rowed the priest back from the island where they lived to the mainland. The song is sung throughout the gaeltacht areas. DEAS AN SAGAIRTIN is a love song, the title meaning "The Love Of My Heart Is Like A Priest." In this song the girl sings that her love is like a priest, as beautiful as a rose in the garden and branded with Mary's seal. Perhaps, she muses, he was going into the priesthood before they met. In the second verse she tells of her wish to meet him and in the third speaks of their favorite meeting places. In the last verse she sings that although they have ". . . neither bent the grass, nor broke the yellow furze. . .", meaning their relationship has been chaste, the neighbors have begun to gossip about them.

One of the most interesting of the songs is the lament UNA BHAN, which Maire Dhonnchadha learned from an old woman in the village of Rosaveel. The woman, who has since died, was the only person she met who remembered the song. The words are very archaic, and the melody seems even older than the text. For the most part it consists of a limited group of tones centered around a fixed tonal center, and only in the final phrases does the line move away from this center, finally reaching a resolution on a tone an octave below the original tonal center. The song begins with a medieval reference to the number symbolism of four, describing the four Marys, the four kisses, the four corners of the earth, which is very difficult to translate.

UNA BHAN means "Fair Una", and the song is a bitter lament sung by young man standing beside Una's grave. The song's violent emotional attitudes in themselves reflect the primitive life of medieval Ireland. Una's father would not allow her to marry the man of her choice and imprisoned her within her room. She fell ill and sent for her lover. He went to her house and found the gates shut against him. He angrily turned back, crying out that if he didn't get word from the house before he had crossed to the other side of the river a short distance away he would never see her again. As he hesitated in mid-stream a servant was sent after him, but he had crossed before the servant reached the river. He refused to turn back and Una died of grief.

Much of the detail of the song's story is from a literary version in the Royal Irish Academy, and can only be inferred from what the man is singing as he stands beside Una's grave. He is still bitter, and has come to her grave for the last time. He asks her to visit him in her spirit form, singing, "Una, isn't it ugly how you're lying now among the rotting corpses." Then he threatens, "If you don't come to me tonight I'll never visit you again." There is no answer, and he turns away into the darkness. It is an intense, brooding song, the mood communicating itself to the listener even when the language is not understood.

The older instrumental music of western Ireland is closely related to the vocal music. There is the same use of folk scales, ornamentation, and the extended melodic development that characterises the singing. In the playing of the slow airs, too, there is often the same emotional intensity. Willy Clancy is a carpenter who lives in the small town of Miltownmalbay on the Clare coast. He is widely regarded as one of the finest Uilleann pipers in Ireland, and among musicians it is felt that there is no one who can play the slow airs with the same passionate sweep as Mr. Clancy. Although he regards his music as ". . . just a hobby" he is in constant demand for concerts and appearances everywhere in Ireland. The Uilleann pipe is one of the oldest pipes still played in Europe and it has been developed to a high degree of complexity. Not only is there the bass drone, but there are also a number of bass tones available to the performer on a series of keyed pipes beside the drone pipe. The keys are usually played with the heel of the hand; although it is sometimes possible to remove one hand from the chanter and play these chord tones with the fingers. By using these other pipes the performer can play a harmonic background to the melody. The chanter itself is fixed with a hinged stopper at the end of the pipe that rests against the performer's leg. By pressing down on the chanter as he is playing the performer can close the end of the pipe, stopping the sound of the chanter. The air for the instrument is supplied by a bellows under the arm rather than by a blown pipe. There are written records of the instrument being played as early as the fifteenth century, and there is a mention of "woolen" pipes in Shakespeare. This is almost certainly a printer's fumbling effort to spell "uilleann."

Both of the slow airs which are grouped with these songs are excellent examples of Mr. Clancy's musical style. By partially covering the holes of the chanter and forcing his hand to tremble he is able to play a throbbing tremolo which would seem impossible on an instrument with a bagpipe's limitations. Both THE ROCKS OF BOURNE and TRIP O'ER THE MOUNTAIN show this tremolo. A glissando technique is used on TRIP O'ER THE MOUNTAIN in which the sliding from a note to a higher note is achieved by slowly removing the fingers from the chanter, usually with a cross fingering to give a greater control of the pitch. Both performances are brilliantly musical.

The slow airs are also played on the violin, or occasionally on the concert flute or tin whistle. The violinist included with this selection is a farmer from near Rathmore in County Kerry named Denis Murphy.

Mr. Murphy usually plays with one of the popular Kerry Ceili bands, but he is also well known as a fine solo artist and like Mr. Clancy is an excellent performer of the slow airs. THE QUEEN OF O'DONNELL is an instrumental version of a well known Kerry song. In the song a man is poisoned by tacks in the soles of his shoes while he is dancing at a ball. His companions take him out into the fields to attempt to revive him and as they are working over him an angel appears and

sings the lament known as THE QUEEN OF O'DONNELL. There is an almost hesitant feeling to Mr. Murphy's performance as he creates an emotional mood of sadness and despair. Some of the ornamentation is probably based on nineteenth century instrumental styles rather than on earlier vocal ornaments, but the mood and style of Mr. Murphy's performance reflect the older musical traditions of the west of Ireland.

VOLUME TWO

SIDE ONE - A FARM CEILI IN COUNTY KERRY

Band 1: Conversation in the Irish Language

Band 2: DUN AN OIR
Sean de Hora - voice

Band 3: THE RAMBLING KERRY LAD
(English)
Bridget Granbhil - voice

Band 4: PREAB SAN OL
Sean de Hora - voice

Band 5: LULLABIES
Bridget Granbhil - voice

Band 6: HARVEST HOME (Hornpipe)
Sean de Hora - accordion

Recorded at Dingle, County Kerry, October 24, 1960. Father McKenna, of the Dingle Presbytery, was of invaluable assistance in contacting and talking with the singers and musicians of the surrounding countryside.

In the farm villages of both Connemara and Kerry there is still a strong tradition of evenings of singing and instrumental music at neighbors' houses. At these "ceilis" everyone takes part, tapping their feet at the dance tunes, and encouraging the person singing with comments at the end of each verse. Usually all the chairs in the house are brought into one room and the people gather in the early evening. A turf fire burns in the small fireplace, a lantern is hung from a hook in the ceiling and there is a scrubbed look to the hearth and the worn stone floor. Usually in one of the corners there is the small light from a candle burning in a red glass bowl in front of a religious picture. The women have changed from their farm clothing and the men are in their dark suits and best shoes. They sit quietly talking; then someone begins singing and the evening passes with songs and music.

The two singers on this group of recordings, Sean de Hora and Mrs. Bridget Granbhil, live on neighboring farms near the tip of the Dingle peninsula. The peninsula is Ireland's westernmost point

of land; just beyond it loom the Blasket Islands. The deserted houses of the abandoned village on the largest Island are visible from the cliffs along the peninsula road. There had been several days of rain before we reached Dingle and Father McKenna of the Dingle Presbytery, who had offered to help us, was forced to drive his car through a sea of mud as we went from one group of farm buildings to another looking for Mr. de Hora. They were older buildings of stone and mortar, the roofs of heavy thatch. Most of the men were in the fields digging potatoes and the women were in the farm yards tending to the chickens and children. Despite the mud the houses were scrupulously clean inside, with curtains and bright covers on the chair seats. Mr. de Hora was helping a friend thatch a house and the work was just finishing when we finally got to the farm. The thatch was in place, with the ropes holding it down, but the edge had not been trimmed. The loose straw hanging over the whitewashed walls of the cottage gave it an unkempt appearance. Mr. de Hora suggested that we go to visit Mrs. Granbhil and we went back along the muddy tracks to another group of farm buildings. It was barren country, the farms on the level ground below a steep range of hills that formed a ridge down the length of the peninsula. The hills were covered with heather and grass, the heather withered to a deep brown shade. On the higher ground there were jagged outcroppings of stone and stretches of cliff. There was no electricity anywhere in the area, and it was necessary to bring the singers into the small town of Dingle to do the recording.

The singing style of western Kerry is stronger and more assertive than the style of the Connemara singers to the north. There is less ornamentation, and the melodies seem closer to nineteenth century patterns. Mr. de Hora, a man in his early forties, has a voice of considerable strength and clarity. Mrs. Granbhil, who is a few years younger than Mr. de Hora, sings with the same emphasis on vocal clarity. As with other Kerry singers they project their voices considerably more than do Connemara singers. The first song, DUN AN OIR, is a local song. The name is translated as Fort of Gold and refers to the ruins of a fortification called Fort del Oro a few miles from Mr. de Hora's farm. In 1580 a party of Spanish soldiers, fighting with Irish allies against the forces of Elizabeth I, was massacred at Fort del Oro by an English army that included Sir Walter Raleigh and the poet Edmund Spenser. DUN AN OIR is not concerned with the history, but simply

describes the villages around the neighboring countryside, praising their beauty, the singer saying that this is the place where he is from himself. The other song in Irish, PREAB SAN OL, is a drinking song expressing the universal cry that life is short; so drink away. Father McKenna translated the title as "Bottoms Up!" THE RAMBLING KERRY LAD is a nineteenth century song describing the adventures of a young Irishman who emigrated to the United States and there is a marked Kerry style to the melody. Mrs. Granbhill remembers hearing it from older people when she was a small girl. The short lullaby songs are popular little verses recited or sung to the children. The last of them describes the mother putting the baby in a golden cradle on firm ground on a fine day, in the shade of a beautiful tree. Of all the instruments played in western Ireland the accordion is the most popular and Mr. de Hora plays it with typical country enthusiasm, his feet tapping on the stone floor in a lively, dancing rhythm.

A PUB IN COUNTY DOWN

Band 7: THE TURFMAN FROM ARDEE
David Harper - voice

Band 8: THE ROSE OF ARANMORE
Sam Allen - voice

Recorded at Bell's Public House, Banbridge, County Down. Mr. Allen was recorded September 30, 1960, and Mr. Harper October 1, 1960.

Singing in the pubs is one of the most popular forms of Saturday night entertainment in Ireland. The men sit at the tables encouraging each other, calling for order for each singer, and joining in on the last choruses if the singer asks them to. There is none of the drunken shouting that usually passes for bar-room singing in other countries. The songs are very different from the older songs of the west of Ireland, but it is this kind of song that is usually thought of as Irish music by the larger English-speaking audience. Often the songs are sentimental, as in THE TURFMAN FROM ARDEE, and often, as in THE ROSE OF ARANMORE, they are about the Ireland or the Irish girl that the emigrant has had to leave behind. One of the most important facts of Irish life for many generations has been the stream of emigration to the United States and to England; so these songs are an expression of emotions that are very real for most Irishmen. Bell's Public House is a typical pub, with an upstairs room for the regular customers, and the bar on the street level. The wall paper was fading and the furniture was a little worn, but the men felt very much at home. Although Mr. Allen and Mr. Harper have a number of friends in Banbridge and often drop into Bell's on Friday and Saturday night, neither of them is a Banbridge man. Mr. Allen is the foreman of a large linen mill in a small village called Doneghcloney, not far from Banbridge, and Mr. Harper is a painting contractor in the seaside town of Newcastle.

SIDE TWO - INSTRUMENTAL DANCES AND AIRS

Band 1: RAKES OF KILDAIR (jig)

Band 2: RAKISH PADDY (Reel)

Band 3: THE SWEEPS (Hornpipe)
Willy Clancy - Uilleann Pipes

Band 4: O'REILLY'S GRAVE (Slow air)
Denis Murphy - violin

Band 5: THE DEAR IRISH BOY (Slow air)
Willie Clancy - Uilleann Pipes

Band 6: BLACK IS THE COLOR OF MY
LOVED ONE'S HAIR (Slow air)

Band 7: THE SHAKESONE and NAME
FORGOTTEN (Reel and Jig)
Willie Clancy - Tin Whistle

Band 8: THE MOUNTAIN ROAD (Reel)
Denis Murphy - violin

Recorded at Ballyheigue, County Kerry, October 23, 1960.

The "Feasts of Music" that have become such an important part of the traditional musical life in Ireland are centered around competitions, and instrumental music has been strongly influenced by these competitions. A typical Fleadh Cecil, such as that held at Ballyheigue in County Kerry in October, 1960, has contests for accordion players, violinists, tin-flute or concert flute players, as well as contests for singers and ceili bands; divided into juvenile, intermediate, and senior age groups. There is a small entry fee of half a crown - about 34 cents - for individual competitors, five shillings - 68 cents - for instrumental duets and trios, and ten shillings - \$1.40 - for ceili bands. The adjudicators are usually musicians of high reputation on the instrument. A "Grand Celebrity Concert" that was held in Ballyheigue the night before the competitions featured prize winners from contests in other parts of Ireland, men who had been asked to adjudicate in the next day's competitions, and musicians and singers who had nearly won national awards in the Dublin competitions. The master of ceremonies carefully introduced each performer with a short speech about his success in the competitions. He would hold up a handwritten piece of paper over to the light at the side of the stage, then go to the microphone and announce that the next artist had been within one point of winning the junior accordion championship at last year's competitions in Dublin. The performer, usually a little nervous, would come onto the stage, pull one of the wooden chairs near the microphone, and play one of his competition pieces with all the seriousness he could muster. Most of them were in dark, tight fitting double breasted suits, their faces wind-burned, their hair mussed.

After the concert most of the musicians went up to the largest hotel in Balleyheigue and began playing again. In every room there were violinists, accordian players, and tin whistle players practising for the next afternoon's competition. As many people as could get inside the hotel were downstairs, crowded into the bar or into a dining room that had been emptied so that more people could get inside. On the outer porch there was a juke box, its recorded boom adding to the din, and people from the town were lined along the outside of the hotel, listening to the music. In every corner downstairs there were small groups of musicians playing as ceili bands and there was the continuous stamping of heavy shoes on the worn floor boards. The next morning the music began again as soon as the musicians were out of bed, only falling silent when it was time for them to go to mass. There was a parade through the small town in the early afternoon, with the musicians and townspeople following a school brass band up the town's one street; then the musicians separated to the three competition buildings and for the rest of the afternoon there was a prolonged program of eighteen different contests.

The standards of competitions like these have set the pattern for much Irish instrumental music. The performers are required to play a jig, a reel, and a hornpipe if they play the accordian, the flute, or the violin, whether they are competing as soloists or as part of a duet or trio. In addition a violinist is required to play a slow air and a ceili band must play a march. As a result most of the musicians have spent much of their time practising jigs, reels, and hornpipes. They will be judged on the accuracy and dexterity of their performance, rather than on musicality; so most of them play with the same strained nervousness that marks amateur talent show competitors in the United States. It is unusual to find real sensitivity or emotional warmth in the music. While giving a new impetus and direction to Irish traditional music the competitions have had the effect of limiting the range and musicality of performances. However, many Irish musicians are aware of this problem and there is an increasing interest in the less stereotyped musical styles; so it is entirely possible that within a few years a new emphasis in the competitions will tend to encourage, rather than to discourage, individual musical gifts, as is unfortunately the tendency today.

The musicians performing this group of airs and dances, Willie Clancy and Denis Murphy, were guests of the Fleadh Ceoil committee, and did not enter the competitions. They were greeted with great enthusiasm at the Grand Celebrity concert, and they both played with sensitivity and warmth. Mr. Clancy is not only well known as a piper, but he is very highly regarded as a performer on the tin flute and he was to adjudicate the tin whistle and concert flute competition. Mr. Murphy had stayed over to encourage friends who were competing. Their music demonstrates the different dances - the jig, the reel, and the hornpipe - and the slow airs that are at the heart of Irish traditional instrumental music.

All three dances, the jigs, reels and hornpipes, are in duple meter, with little rhythmic accent. Their melodies are short phrases of four or eight measures. There are literally thousands of melodies used for these dances, many of them taken from the older airs. The jig RAKES OF KILDAIR, played by Mr. Clancy, is taken from the air TRIP O'ER THE MOUNTAIN, which he played on the first record of this set. His first two dances, RAKES OF KILDAIR and RAKISH PADDY, a reel, make extensive use of the chord tones of the pipes; while the third, the hornpipe THE SWEEPS, is a display piece for the chanter that ends in a cascade of descending triplets. All three of the slow airs, played on the violin, the pipes, and the tin whistle, show the strong influence of traditional Irish singing on these instrumental pieces. O'REILLY'S GRAVE, as played by Denis Murphy, makes considerable use of the older Irish scales. The tin whistle played by Mr. Clancy is an ordinary straight metal whistle with a plastic mouthpiece, and the delicacy and expressiveness of his playing is remarkable in view of the instrument's limitations. He has developed a number of cross fingerings and partial fingerings which make it possible for him to play a number of semitones, giving the simple instrument a wider musical range. In the playing of both Denis Murphy and Willie Clancy is a warmth and vitality that gives their music its colorful excitement.

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One of the problems involved in the recording was the difficulty of the Irish language. Mr. McDonough gave us the outline of the meaning of his songs, as did Mr. and Mrs. McMahon in Connemara. Father McKenna, in Kerry, helped us with the songs of Mr. de Hora and Mrs. Granbhill. Ampex equipment was used for the recording, with ElectroVoice microphone. Recording and editing by S. B. Charters, with very considerable technical assistance from A. R. Danberg.