

The Isle of Wight and our Irish Music Rambles

In the mid 1970s we played at an Irish night for the Island Irish and their descendants, in a large upstairs room in Newport. They must have been scrapping the barrel as normally we did not play Irish music back then. Remarkably we found that we did already know many of the songs and some of the tunes we played in our Ceilidh Band. The evening was a roaring success with a very large number there. It seemed many worked in the Tourist Industry and others had retired to the island. Of course we had to play many lively jigs and reels plus Irish waltzes and naturally accompany Uncle "so and so" with his rendition of Danny Boy! There was also a wonderful Irish sax player playing songs and tunes. We wonder if the IOW Irish Club still exists.

Later when we left the island we played in an Irish group that backed an Irish singer. He was a complete character and we never knew what we were going to play. We could not hear whether he said the key of D or G for a certain song. Once I played completely in the wrong key but at the end received a bigger applause than normal! We played along the south coast at weddings, birthdays, christenings and all sorts of parties. The singer was a train conductor by day and used to spot young ladies carrying violins on their way up to the Royal Academy. He used to ask them if they wanted to play in an Irish Band. We, therefore, had these super players that were a stunning attraction for the band. Remarkably they quickly learnt the various Irish bow styles with little hint of their classical background. This has given us a large repertoire of songs and tunes which we still play to this day.

Later we were resident in a pub where we played Irish music for about 4 years. It was led by us but others were welcome to join in. We were playing for the audience who were spending their money at the bar. We included what we called Celtic plus tunes which were some Scottish, French Canadian and others. Often at the end of song we went straight into a set of tunes. All this helped to keep the evening full of interest.

Irish bands and sessions can be found in almost any town. Some sessions are very generous and provide a list of tunes played, some even provide the music if you read. They always include some of the old favourites and encourage new players to have a go. They play for the audience which helps the patron and his takings. Some however, just play breakneck speed reels with a few jigs. Some are serious closed sessions. You takes your pick.

In our view it always helps to say what tunes you are going to play. We were once playing with a professional Irish player and asked after he had played a tune what its name was. He said it was called "Froth on the Top". We had searched for this tune and could not find it. Some years later we asked him the same thing about a different tune. He said it was called "Froth on the Top". It turned out that if he had forgotten the name of a tune he always called it "Froth on the Top". Great name for a new tune!

Here is a useful list of some of the songs and tunes we have played in Irish bands and at sessions. The tunes are on the this site. We did produce a CD for learning favourite Irish songs. We still have a few copies that we would be delighted to give away! Also enclose list of books we have used.

Irish Tune Sets

Set 1

- 1 Egan's Polka G / Maggie in the Wood G
- 2 Thugamar* Am / Kerry Slide Am
- 3 Cliffs of Moher* Am / Old Grey Cat Em / Fred Finns D
- 4 Galway Hornpipe D / Rights of Man Em
- 5 Shoe the Donkey G / Sonny Brogan's Mazurka D / Charlie Lennon's G

6 George Brabazon* G / Going to the Well D / Old Favourite Slide G

Set 2

- 7 Snowy Breasted Pearl* D / Walshe's Polka G / Terry Teahan's Polka D
- 8 Eagles's Whistle* D / Killavil Jig Em / Out on the Ocean G
- 9 Castle Kelly* Am / The Banshee G / Cooley's Em
- 10 Piper through the Meadow G / Princess Royal Am
- 11 Harvest Home D / Sweep's Hornpipe D
- 12 Drops of brandy G / Humours of Whiskey Bm

Set 3

- 13 The Murroe G / Dan Mac's Polka / Limerick Reel G
- 14 Young Jane* G / Boys of Ballisodare G / The Butterfly Em
- 15 Moving Cloud G / Cup of Tea Em
- 16 Patsy Geary's D / O'Keefe's Slide G / Paidrig O' Keefe's Slide D
- 17 Donegal Mazurka D / Vincent Campbell's Mazurka D
- 18 Sweeney's Polka G / Maids of Ardagh / Kerry Polka
- 19 Lanigan's Ball Em / Smash the Windows D / Gary Owen G

Set 4

- 20 Fanny Power* G / Rakes of Mallow G / Salmon Tails up the Water G
- 21 Merry Blacksmith D / Temperance Reel G / New Copperplate G
- 22 An Mhaigdean Mhara* D / Road to Lisdoonvarna Em / Dennis Murphy's D
- 23 King of the Fairies* Em / Sally Gardens G / Pigtown Fling G
- 24 Baiden Fheidhlimi* D / The Navvie G / Manchester Hornpipe D
- 25 Cook in the Kitchen G / Dusty Windowsills Am

Set 5

- 26 Si Bhean* Am / Ballydesmond Polkas 1 & 2 Am
- 27 Mug of Brown Ale Am / Lilting Fisherman G / Gillian's Apples G
- 28 Concertina Reel D / Golden Keyboard Em
- 29 Boulavogue* G / Battle of Aughrim Am / O' Neill's Cavalcade Em
- 30 Barney's Pilgrim G / Saddle the Pony / My Darling Asleep D
- 31 The Fairies G / Sligo Fancy G

Set 6

- 32 Walls of Liscarroll* Em / John Ryan's / Drowsy Maggie Em
- 33 Rakes of Kildare Am / Irish Washerwoman G
- 34 Inisheer* G / Donegal Reel D / Julia Delaney's Em
- 35 Off to California G / Dance of the Honeybees D / Silver Spire G
- 36 Dick's Gossip D / Toss the Feathers D
- 37 Eleanor Plunkett* G / Sweets of May G / Dingle Regatta G

Set 7

- 38 Merrily Kissed the Quaker G / Behind the Haystack D
- 39 Scartaglen Polka G / Knocknabower Polka G
- 40 Planxty Irwin* G / Trip to Sligo Em / Tripping Upstairs D
- 41 Give me your hand* G / Wind that shakes the barley D / Fairy Dance D
- 42 Eamonn an Chnoic* G / Comb Your hair and Curl it Em / Foxhunters D

Set 8

- 43 St Mary's / Church Street G

- 44 Star of the County Down Em / Swallow Tail Em / Kesh Jig G
- 45 Bag of Spuds / London Lasses G
- 46 Humours of Glendart D / Geese in the Bog Bm
- 47 Ger the Rigger D / Drunken Sailor D
- 48 Haunted House G / Blackthorn Stick G / Ten P Bit Am

Set 9

- 49 Kerry Mills D / O'Keefe's Polka D
- 50 Si Beag Si Mor* D / Silver Spear D / Earl's Chair Bm
- 51 Father O'Flynn D / When Sick, is it tea you want? D / Morrison's Jig Em
- 52 The Ashplant Em / Maid behind the bar D
- 53 Staten Island D / Breakdown G
- 54 Lark in the Morning D

Set 10

- 55 Ballintore Fancy G / Ships are Sailing Em
- 56 Kid on the Mountain Em
- 57 Banish Misfortune D
- 58 Salamanca D
- 59 Rosin the Beau G / Paddy's Return(Kettled boiled over) D
- 60 Gravel Walk Am / Boys of Malin A

* denotes air

Session Song List

- All for me Grog G
- Black Velvet Band G
- Botany Bay G
- Carrickfergus A
- Cliffs of Doneen G
- Danny Boy D
- Dirty Old Town G
- Drill ye Tarriers Em / An Dearig Dan Em
- Fields of Athenry G
- From Clare to Here D
- Galway Shawl G
- Hills of Connemara D
- Holy Ground D
- Home Boys Home G
- I'll Tell me ma G / Marie's Wedding G
- I'm a Rover G
- Irish Rover A
- John of Dreams G
- Jolly Beggarman D
- Jug of Punch D
- Kettle Boiled Over D
- Leaving of Liverpool D
- Let Him Go, Let Him Tarry G
- Molly Malone G
- Moonshiner G
- Muirshem Durkin D

New York Girls D
Ould Triangle G
Paddle Your Own Canoe G
Pub with no Beer D
Rambles of Spring G
Real Old Mountain Dew G
Reilly's Daughter G
Seven Drunken Nights D
Spencil Hill Em
Star of the County Down Em
Steal Away G
Step it out Mary Em
Sweet Rose of Allendale G
Take Me Up to Monto G
Whip Jamboree Em
Whiskey in the Jar D
Wild Rover G
Pack Up Your Troubles Set G

Irish Sets for a Typical Evening

Set A

Moonshiner G

Killavil Em / Out on the Ocean G

Sweet Rose of Allendale G

Inisheer G/ Donegal Reel D / Julia Delaney's Em

Katy Daly D

Dan Mac's / Limerick Reel

Reilly's Daughter G/ *Tralee Jail Em*

Star of the County Down Em

Planxty Irwin G / Trip to Sligo Em / Tripping Upstairs D

Set B

Rambles of Spring G

Egan's Polka G / Maggie in the Wood G

From Clare to Here A

Shoe the Donkey G/ Sonny Brogan's D

I'll Tell me Ma G

Swallow Tail Em / Kesh Jig G

Botany Bay G

John Ryan's D / Drowsy Maggie Em

Set C

Hills of Connemara D

Sally Gardens G / Pigtown Fling G

Galway Girl D

Galway Hornpipe D / Rights of Man Em

Real Old Mountain Dew G

Blackthorn Stick G / 10p bit Am

Muirshem Durken D

Saddle the Pony G / My Darling Asleep D

Set D

Dirty Old Town Em

An Mhaigdean Mhara D / Road to Lisdoonvarna Em / Dennis Murphy's D

Leaving of Liverpool D

Ger the Rigger D / Drunken Sailor D

Pub with no Beer D

Lark in the morning D

Wild Rover G

Star of the County Down Em

Wind that Shakes the Barley D / Fairy Dance D

Whiskey in the Jar D

Irish Sets Paddy's Night

Part A

I'm a Rover G

Black Velvet Band G

Killavil Em / Out on the Ocean G

Fields of Athenry G

I'll Tell me Ma G

Shoe the Donkey G/ Sonny Brogan's D

Real Old Mountain Dew G

The Galway Shawl G

Galway Hornpipe D / Rights of Man Em

Star of the County Down Em

Muirshem Durken D

Planxty Irwin G / Trip to Sligo Em / Tripping Upstairs D

Part B

An Mhaigdean Mhara D / Road to Lisdoonvarna Em / Dennis Murphy's D

Rambles of Spring G

Dan Mac's / Limerick Reel

Step it out Mary Em

Galway Girl D

Silver Spear D / Earl's Chair Bm

From Clare to Here A

Molly Malone G

Swallow Tail Em / Kesh Jig G

Pub with no Beer D

Carrickfergus Bb

Egan's Polka G / Maggie in the Wood G

Botany Bay G

Inisheer G/ Donegal Reel D / Julia Delaney's Em

Part C

Hills of Connemara D

Spanish Lady G

Sally Gardens G/ Pigtown Fling G

Danny Boy D

Katy Daly D

Barney's Pilgrim G/ Saddle the Pony G / My Darling Asleep D

Dirty Old Town Em

Sweet Rose of Allendale G

Lanigan's Ball / Smash the Windows / Gary Owen

Paddle your own Canoe G

Wind that Shakes the Barley D / Fairy Dance D

Leaving of Liverpool D

Wild Rover G

Blackthorn Stick G / 10p bit Am

Final song:

Parting Glass Dm

Books

The very best Irish Songs Ballads Pat Conway Walton Volumes 1 - 4

Folksongs and Ballads Popular in Ireland John Loesberg Ossian Volumes 1 - 4

Soodlum's Selection of Irish Ballads Pat Conway Soodlum Volumes 1 - 4

Ballads from the Pubs of Ireland James N Healy Ossian Volumes 1 - 3