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"Will you meet me on Clare Island?":

Music-Making, Islandness and Ethnography in a Small Island Community

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of Ph.D.

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Declaration

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at NUI Galway or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of NUI Galway concerning plagiarism.

_____   _____

Rory McCabe   Date

Abstract

This dissertation presents an ethnographic account of music and social life on Clare Island, a small community off the west coast of Ireland. Focusing on the structures and settings of music-making, the research details the interactions between island environment and performance in the expression of island life in the twenty-first century. This original research demonstrates music-making as a fundamental process in island community life and an important measure of island health or vitality. Along with examining music-making on Clare Island, the work also explores representations of island life within Irish cultural discourse and suggests dissimilarities between popular narrative and islander experience.

The ethnography centres on fieldwork conducted in 2017 but includes an historical perspective in the analysis. Grounded through ethnographic detail and living memory, this history examines the changing contexts of music-making and island life since the 1940s. Through this modern history, the ethnography describes music-making as an enduring social process in island life. The details of music-making on Clare Island in the twenty-first century suggest that against a changing social, economic and technological environment the universal themes of social bonding persist as core values in the island experience.

The research greatly expands the scope of Irish Studies and also makes important contributions to the fields of ethnomusicology, anthropology, cultural history and Island Studies. This ethnography also complements the Royal Irish Academy's multidisciplinary research in the *New Survey of Clare Island,* rounding out the analysis of Clare Island with a comprehensive account of community life in the twenty-first century. Through its analysis of music and island life in the twenty-first century, this dissertation makes an original contribution to knowledge.

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Acknowledgments

Later (in Chapter Three) Michael Barrett suggests that invitations to island station dances in the past required some diplomatic forethought. There was not enough space in the older cottage kitchens to entertain the entire community, and so it is with this dissertation. I could not include all the people I wanted to in this work, nor can I now thank all those I should. Still, I must mention a few names, in particular those who directly shaped this PhD project and who helped me to complete the work within its allotted four-year timeline.

The research commenced in 2016 but started many years beforehand, so I must begin at the beginning. I want to thank my parents for providing me with the curiosity, stability and confidence to pursue a project of this magnitude. In short, to thank them for giving me the raw materials and an island upbringing that was interesting enough to form the basis of a PhD. I want to thank Cora Keating for her enthusiasm and support in the lead up to the project. Thanks to Mel Mercier, Ioannis Tsioulakis, Deirdre Ní Chonghaile and Niamh Prior for their help in getting the project fully off the ground; the start was the hardest part. Thanks also to Peter Gill for his continual questioning from the outset and his many suggestions during the final write up stage.

Thank you to Louis De Paor, Verena Commins, Nessa Cronin and everyone at Centre for Irish Studies for your ongoing support and feedback throughout this process. Thank you also to Lillis Ó Laoire and Sean Ryder for their guidance during the annual GRC review. Special thanks to Samantha Williams for her patience and help in negotiating the intricacies of University procurement and accessing research funds.

This project would not be possible without funding support from the Irish Research Council, and I am proud to represent my island community as an IRC Scholar. I also want to thank the Ireland Canada University Foundation (ICUF) for further endorsement of this research. In 2019, the ICUF awarded me a Flaherty Scholarship to travel to the Institute for Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island. I received a wonderful welcome there from Laurie Brinklow and Jim Randall at the Institute of Island Studies. Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, this trip (in March 2020) was cancelled as it was beginning.

But the coronavirus had some positive outcomes for the PhD as a whole; because of the 2020 lockdown in Ireland, this dissertation was, in effect, written entirely on Clare Island. I submitted this final manuscript to the University from my home office space on Clare Island.

Along with the research itself, these actions prove that islands are viable sites for intellectual labour, and in the digital age can compete with other locations. However, working from home is not always easy, and I want to thank my family for their continued support during the final write up—in the months when I disappeared under three layers of self-isolation: coronavirus, Clare Island, and dissertation write up.

I am sincerely indebted to the people who agreed to be interviewed for this ethnography. Their names are listed in the bibliography, but I would like to give special mention to Cyril McCabe (1958–2019) and Michael Barrett (1932–2017), both of whom died during the period of this research. To paraphrase another famous Irish islander, their likes will never be seen again. But each generation of islanders creates new characters: island women and men who exemplify all that is good about living in a small island community. With this perspective, I want to remember thirteen-year-old Clare Islander Morgan Pinder. His tragic death in August 2018 was a terrible blow to the community. Morgan was a natural performer, and his wonderful recitations at the island Comhaltas Seisiún belied his young age. It was difficult to write about the Seisiún after Morgan's death, but he remains quietly in the background of those fieldwork descriptions from 2017.

The ultimate words of thanks go to my supervisor, Méabh Ní Fhuarthain. This dissertation is a product of her continued support and guidance over the last four years, but also her influence long before I came to the Centre for Irish Studies. This PhD is (after many twists) the culmination of ideas developed during undergraduate seminars with Méabh at the Music Department in UCC. It has taken some years, but I'm delighted that the intellectual enthusiasm she imparted back then finds its full outlet here in this doctoral research.

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"Will you meet me on Clare Island?":

Music-Making, Islandness and Ethnography in a Small Island Community

1. Introduction

This dissertation examines music and social life on Clare Island, a small island five kilometres off the west coast of Ireland. The research interprets Clare Island as the living population—the community—who share historical, social and cultural experiences within this island environment. This original research proposes that group participation through music-making is an integral component in sustaining a shared experience of island life or islandness. Alongside basic requirements of population and infrastructures, social participation in music-making is a central mechanism in generating and maintaining island community. Furthermore, as a social process and as a product of cultural activity, music offers an index of island vitality and community aliveness. The various contexts and settings of music-making reveal the general conditions of life on Clare Island in the twenty-first century. Music-making details the material experience of island life and the less tangible aspects of islandness and community perspective.

The life or vitality of Clare Island as a social group is expressed through island music-making and this dissertation provides a comprehensive ethnographic account of that process. While grounded in the present, this ethnography uncovers patterns of continuity and change within island life over several decades. Within an unchanging maritime environment, islanders have experienced increasing technological connectivity and layers of modernisation. Against this backdrop, music-making acts as enduring social glue, maintaining both real-time social interactions and Clare Islanders' sense of island vitality.

Through the interdisciplinary scope of Irish Studies, this research applies the tools and methods of anthropology, ethnomusicology and cultural history to produce a detailed explanation of music on Clare Island and in the lives of islanders. As an ethnography, the research incorporates the cognate disciplines of ethnomusicology and anthropology. At its core, the dissertation presents an anthropological analysis of island life outlining the details of community spaces, the annual cycles of community life, and the insider (islander)

perspective. Grounded in this detail, the research applies ethnomusicological tools to examine music-making within the island experience. Throughout the dissertation, I contextualise the ethnographic present with historical analysis examining island life and music-making in the second half of the twentieth century. This cultural history also examines changes in the material culture of island music-making and community life. Alongside these core methodologies, the research includes some conventional Irish Studies analysis, and cultural perspectives of islandness are addressed through key literary texts. In particular, the Blasket Island authors provide points of comparison with the experience of islanders on Clare Island. As an interdisciplinary project, the research also references other academic disciplines, including a sociological examination of population change, migration and community participant profiles which enhances the ethnographic research. Finally, perspectives offered by Island Studies enrich discussions of the Clare Island experience. Over the last thirty years, Island Studies has emerged as an interdisciplinary research area that aims to research island matters from within the boundaries and perspectives of island life. Cohering both with the goals of ethnography and the aims of this project, Island Studies informs much of the dissertation. Méabh Ní Fhuarthain and David M. Doyle suggest that Irish Studies has the potential to offer insight into the experience of "ordinary Irish life" (Ní Fhuarthain and Doyle 2013, 4). This ethnography draws on the full range of tools available through Irish Studies to explain ordinary life in a particular Irish setting.

Islandness and community vitality

Irish cultural discourse, literature and political rhetoric present varying depictions of island life. Diarmaid Ferriter observes that in the twenty-first century the narrative of the Irish islands continues in strong and often opposing terms:

> The islands continue to be presented as a site of innovation and tradition; landscapes of worry but also creativity and ultimate getaway but practically often struggling to survive. (2018, 11)

While Ferriter's overall analysis is balanced, this quote reveals a presumption about the islands of Ireland; that these are communities facing constant issues of survival. Throughout the twentieth century, commentators cite depopulation, peripherality or lack of infrastructure as markers of unsustainability and a certain deficiency (or poverty) in island life (detailed in Chapter One). Looking from the Irish mainland, the islands appear markedly similar. But these similarities do not explain the different outcomes in the development of island

communities over the last one hundred years. Despite decades of contradicting narratives, it is not clear how community sustainability or island vitality might be properly assessed. In 2020, small communities continue to inhabit the islands and to defy predictions of their decline. In their dealings with the State the Irish islands have benefited from a group identity. But while all islanders experiences similar issues in their connection to the mainland, each island community responds to different internal challenges. Moreover, each island community is a collection of individuals acting within their own historically defined social environment.

This research considers the experience of island life, or islandness, on one Irish island. The term islandness implies a perceived condition, character or quality in island life. Various scholars (particularly through Island Studies) have undertaken to describe islandness (Baldacchino 2008; Conkling 2007; Mezzana, Lorenz and Kelman 2012; Royle 2001; Vannini and Taggart 2013). As an experiential quality, islandness has multiple variants and is difficult to define (Gillis and Lowenthal 2007). However, for this research islandness denotes the experience of island life as perceived by the resident community; islandness is comparable to the emic or insider perspective in anthropology (Eriksen 2001). Islandness on Clare Island refers to the details and experiences of community life. At other points in the dissertation (particularly Chapter One), I refer to a generalised perception of life on the Irish islands or Irish islandness. While islandness on Clare Island is specific and local, Irish islandness (of which Clare Island is a part) suggests a broader, less detailed, perception about islands, island communities and islanders. Island Studies scholar Godfrey Baldacchino notes that across the globe islands are often sites of imagination and myth. He observes that islands "have occupied such a powerful place in modern Western imagination that they lend themselves to sophisticated fantasy and mythology" (2005, 247–248). Accordingly, Irish islandness is in part the Irish variant of a general phenomenon, but it also derives from particular nationalist narrative and historical developments in Ireland.

On Clare Island islandness is a Venn diagram with several layers. This experience overlaps Irish cultural identity, off-shore living, and the particulars of Clare Island's social history and environmental setting. This represents a detailed set of physical and mental constructs centred around the island population and incorporating nonresident social actors. Music-making provides a unique lens for examining islandness and the contours of this experience. As a social, cultural and economic activity, music reflects the layers of community life.

The term community has a contested usage in anthropology and the social sciences. The basic tenets of twentieth century anthropological research were developed through the study of small-scale local communities, villages and other isolated peoples (Eriksen 2001, 58–59). During the last ninety years of modern anthropological research in Ireland the study of rural community passed through several stages (Wilson and Donnan 2006, 23–27). While contemporary studies of Irish rural community (Peace 2001) account for new theoretical paradigms, the study of community remains a thorny area. Although an island presents a clear geographical boundary for the discussion of community—implying a coherence to the idea of island community—islanders are not a uniform body and their social interactions stretch beyond the shoreline. In this ethnography community is a term of designation referring to the island population. The community refers to the group of individuals who live on Clare Island and are part of the daily experience of island life. Elsewhere, I refer to Clare Island's music-making community. This refers to a broader grouping but is again an empirical categorisation based on the individuals who participate in island music-making. The term community describes participation but also infers an experiential category; the community are the group of people who experience island life.

Although an extensive discussion of community as a theoretical construct lies outside the scope of this project, Anthony Cohen's *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (2001 [1985]) remains a concise and relevant analysis of community as an experiential social category (Jenkins 2014, 138–142). Cohen describes the work as a study of the empirical phenomena of people's attachment to ideas of community. He proposes that community is ultimately a symbolic construct existing within the minds of its members "and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of fact" (2001 [1985], 98). Although a small island has obvious structural boundaries surrounding community, Cohen proposes that such elements are secondary compared to the mental or symbolic assertion of community:

> . . . culture—the community as experienced by its members—does not consist in social structure or in 'the doing' of social behaviour. It inheres, rather, in 'the thinking' about it. It is in this sense that we can speak of the community as a symbolic, rather than a structural, construct. (2001 [1985], 98)

According to this argument, the strength, or liveliness, of the island community arises from members "perception of the vitality of its culture" (2001 [1985], 118). Community members must actively participate in perpetuating and regenerating the symbolic elements of community life. As an activity involving communal participation, music-making becomes a measure of island sustainability or community vitality.

Cohen's assessment of community challenges a statistical analysis of island life in the twenty-first century. Although people continue to live on the Irish islands, it does not follow that there is a group experience of community or island identity. Through globalisation, modernisation and gentrification resident island populations are subject to atomised social experiences. Consequently, it is not enough that people are living on islands to speak of an experience of an island community or islandness. Islandness relies on a shared group experience arising from a perception of community. Therefore, what matters for this ethnography is that on Clare Island there are a group of people who consider themselves—in the terms set out by Cohen—as belonging to a community. I propose that the willingness of people to participate (through music-making) in the symbolic construction of a group identity is a mark of Clare Island's vitality as a community.

From an historical perspective, vitality suggests a blunt distinction between island communities remaining in the present (alive) and islands that are no longer inhabited (dead). But in this dissertation island vitality proposes subtle qualities of aliveness, and a power of enduring, with antonyms of inactivity or lifelessness. In the twenty-first century, an assessment of island vitality indicates that a community is actively engaged in sustaining its own cultural life. Island vitality suggests that islanders are socially active and engage with each other. As a form of social participation, music-making expresses both the multiple layers of community life and a manifestation of island vitality. This original ethnographic research proposes that community bonding through music-making is both an important mechanism in, and a measure of, island vitality.

"Becoming ethnographic": method and methodology

This dissertation is an insider ethnography based on research within my local community. As an islander, I use an ethnographic approach to island issues and my aim is to study the island community voiced through local perspective.

At a personal level, this project is an ethnography of music-making and island life conducted amongst family, friends and neighbours. Growing up during the 1980s and 1990s, my personal outlook was shaped by the social and economic changes taking place in Irish society. During this period, a series of modernisations also transformed daily life on Clare Island (outlined below). My perspective was further shaped by the family home and business. Until the 1990s, McCabe's was the site of the local pub, shop and post office. Throughout the twentieth century, the building (also known as Granuaile House) was synonymous with the social and commercial life of the community. Until its closure in 1998, McCabe's bar

was one of the main venues for music-making on Clare Island. My formative experiences of music-making (and community) were shaped by this environment and changing cultural landscape. This research project stems from a desire to examine these changes, and continuities, in island life.

Despite these background contexts, this dissertation is wholly the result of PhD research conducted from 2016 to 2020. Concentrated fieldwork for the project took place in 2017. This included standard ethnographic methods of participant observation and audio-visual recordings. Islanders', and community stakeholders', accounts of island life were gathered through ethnographic interviews and field notes between 2016 and 2020. Just one interview, with Michael Barrett, resulted from earlier research. Further ethnographic material was gathered from secondary sources discussed in Chapter One. Although central to the project, the fieldwork period represents a small portion of a lifetime of observation, participation and conversations with islanders. Therefore, while a select number of voices appear in the text, there are many more that inform the analysis.

The 2017 fieldwork period represents the ethnographic present in this research. But the dramatic changes occurring in island life since the 1980s demand an historical perspective in analysis. In addition, the living memory of the Clare Island community contains older experiences of change in island life stretching back to the 1940s. This establishes at least an eighty-year window of memory for contextualising music-making on Clare Island (the oldest ethnographic participant was born in 1932). In 2017, music-making on the island is a product of this community history. The ethnography therefore includes an historical perspective of island life in the twentieth century. An eighty-year period (circa 1940 to 2020) matches living memory with important social, economic and cultural developments. This includes the last cycle of significant population decline (1946–1966), and the shift to the current community population range (between 130 and 160 people). Additionally, this timeframe includes the period since the first modern ethnographic research was conducted on Clare Island in the 1950s (Walsh 1958).

Overall, the post-war period onwards places the study within a timeframe of significant social changes on Clare Island—and changes in State involvement in island life—in the second half of the twentieth century. Islanders experienced increased connection to the mainland through improved boats and harbour facilities. Beginning in the 1960s, island tourism increased through new infrastructural developments. During the 1980s, several key modernisations revolutionised domestic life: electricity supply in 1983, a group water scheme in 1986, and the employment opportunities offered by Clare Island Sea Farm from 1987

onwards. From the early 1990s, greater public spending by the State led to improved services, roads and the establishment of a subsidised ferry schedule. All these changes influenced island music-making and transformed the experience of island life. In 2017, these traces of the past continue to shape the experience of this off-shore community.

2. Introducing Clare Island

This section introduces Clare Island as a physical environment and presents the cultural landscape of the island community. The description also outlines the locations of music-making on the island.
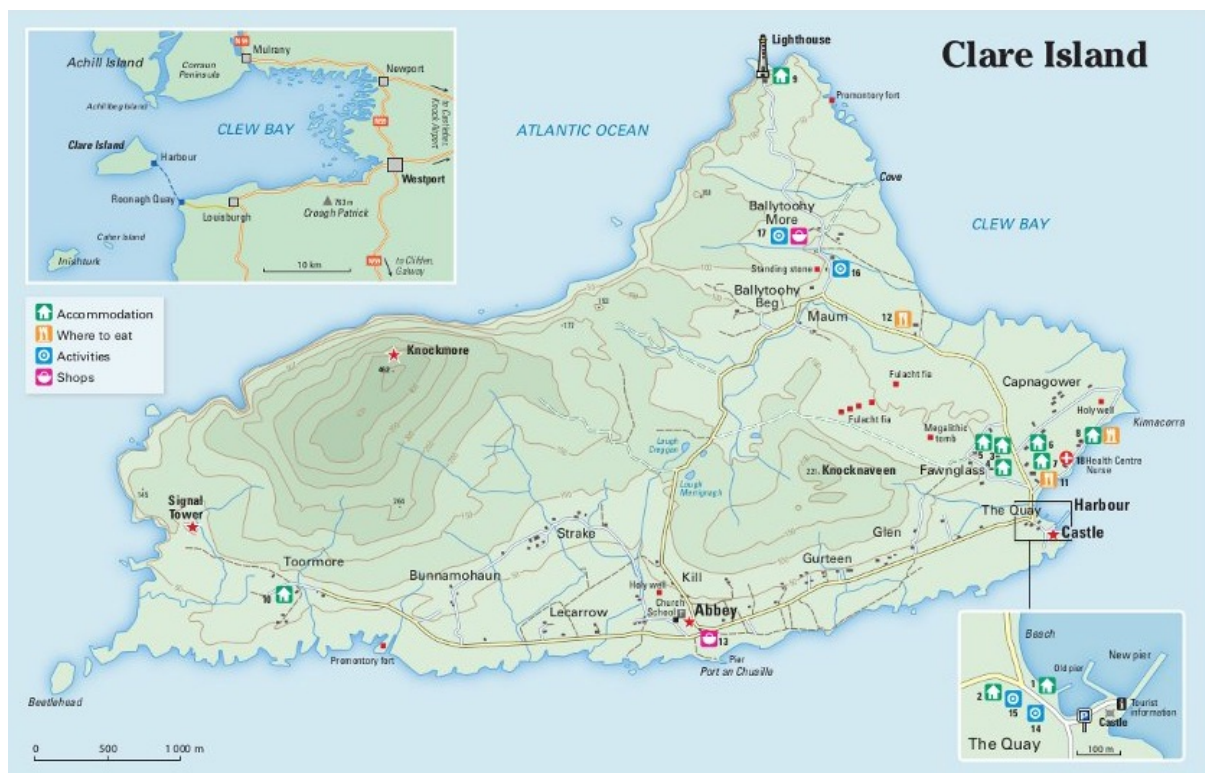
Figure 1: Tourist map of Clare Island with insert sections detailing the Quay area and island's location in Clew Bay (Courtesy of Cliara Development Company).

Clare Island is a small island located at the mouth of Clew Bay in Co. Mayo. The island is approximately 7.6km long on an east-west axis and 4.2km on its widest point from north to south. Overall, the island covers some 1,640 hectares and has over twenty kilometres of coastline. The 2016 census records a population of 159 people living on the island, but this fluctuates depending on seasonal variations (discussed in Chapter Two). Aside from these basic details, an introduction to Clare Island might begin with the visual details of its features as presented to a tourist visiting the island. This approach to the island, an external to internal

perspective, frames all encounters with the community by mainland researchers, writers, tourists and visitors of all kinds.

With the bogs of Mayo to the north and the mountains of Connemara to the south, Clew Bay frames a picturesque stretch of coastline that has attracted travellers, tourists and pilgrims since medieval times. Thomas O'Neill Russell in his *Beauties and Antiquities of Ireland* describes Clew Bay as "the queen, not alone of Irish bays, but of all bays in these islands" (1897, 306). He continues with a description of Clare Island as seen from the inner bay and the area around the nearby port and market town of Westport:

> Exactly at the mouth of the bay, stretching almost straight across it, and almost completely shutting it in from the Atlantic, rises the great mass of Clare Island, making the bay a safe harbour as well as adding in a most extraordinary degree to its beauty. Clare Island is almost a mountain; its highest point cannot be less than fifteen hundred feet above the sea level, and it rises sheer from the water. It is almost as beautiful an object as Croagh Patrick itself. (1897, 309)

On the south shore of the bay is Roonagh harbour, the principal access point to the island. From this viewpoint, two hills dominate the profile of Clare Island. In the centre is Knocknaveen or Glen Hill (221 metres) and to the west is Knockmore (462 metres) more commonly referred to by islanders as The Big Hill. With its lower coastal areas rising to these hills, Clare Island casts a distinctive silhouette.

In 2017, the crossing from Roonagh to Clare Island took approximately twenty minutes on the State subsidised ferry sailing. Travel writer Thomas Mason begins his description of Clare Island from the perspective of his journey out to the island in the 1930s:

> Clare Island, which is visible from Achill, guards the entrance to Clew Bay, at the head of which is situated the important town of Westport. The mails which are distributed from Louisburgh, are carried three times a week, weather permitting, by a contractor whose boat leaves the little pier of Roonagh in the early afternoon . . .The approach to Clare Island is most picturesque. The island rises steeply to Knockmore, a mountain of fifteen hundred feet high which dominates a landscape that is intersected here and there by valleys and lesser hills. (1936, 41)

Looking northwards from the pier on Clare Island, the visitor can see the hills of Currane and Mulranny. Looking eastwards to the lowest point of the horizon, one can make out the shapes of the inner islands of Clew Bay with the plains of Mayo beyond. A discerning eye can also see in the distance the outlines of the cages for Clare Island Sea Farm, an aquaculture business producing organic farmed Salmon. Panning to the right and onto the south shore of the bay, the horizon rises and falls onwards into north Connemara. The distinctive peaks of Croagh Patrick (764 metre) and Mweelrea mountain (814 metres) dominate this view from the harbour and the entire south shore of Clare Island.

The cultural landscape

On a map (Figure 1 above), Clare Island is somewhat triangular, with its scalene angles pointing north, west and east. Though the shoreline is less defined in reality, this distinction between north, west and east, carries over into the imagining of the island landscape. Islanders refer to the North of the island, the West, and the Quay area at the east, but never reference south as direction of movement (Walsh 1958, 139–138). However, with sea cliffs (and the Big Hill) to the north/north-west and Glen Hill in the centre, it is the south coastline that offers the most hospitable area for cultivation, dwelling and maritime access.

Most houses on Clare Island are located along one of the two main roads, the West Road and the North Road. The island roads are functionally single lane and vary in quality. The West Road runs from the harbour along the south coast for six kilometres and ends as a dirt path near the ruins of the nineteenth century signal tower (Gosling, Manning and Waddell 2007, 181). Along the West Road—some two kilometres from the harbour—is the townland of Kill and a central hub of island life. This small cluster of buildings includes a Catholic church, a former Cistercian abbey, the primary school and the island shop. A few hundred metres west of the school is a small row of council houses known as Well's Place. Apart from this cluster of buildings in Kill, and the houses near the harbour, most structures on the island are spread out.

The abbey sits in the middle of the island graveyard and is a constant in the spiritual side of island life since the thirteenth century. The abbey was the subject of the fourth volume of the *New Survey of Clare Island* (Manning, Gosling and Waddell, 2005) and is a national monument noted for its interior artwork. The oldest reference to music-making on the island comes from the ceiling frescos. These depict harp and lyre players, along with a myriad of real and mythical creatures. Beside the abbey is the Catholic church which was built in 1862. There is no longer a resident priest on the island but visiting priests and an active parish council maintain a weekend mass or lay service. On occasion the island choir or other configurations of musicians perform at the services. Directly west of the Church, St Patrick's National School (built in 1887) is the sole site of formal education in the community. Island children travel to the mainland for secondary school and other further education. Through the school's annual variety-concert, and other school events, most islanders have performed on stage in front of the local community (Gill, 2017).

Down the hill from the church carpark is O'Malley's Food Store, the location of the island shop and post office. This building was originally constructed as a dance hall in the 1940s and was an important site for music-making until the late 1960s. In the 1970s and

1980s the hall was used for dramatic productions by the local drama group and as a space for the primary school Christmas concerts. In 1990, following the closure of the shop at the Quay, the island Community Co-Op established a grocery shop in the building (Crosby 2004, 72). After several years, local man Padraic O'Malley took over the business and An Post services were added to the shop in 1999. Access to basic amenities are important for community vitality and the lack of such services are often cited as factors in the decline of island communities such as on Achill Beg, Co. Mayo (Beaumont 2005), Inishark, Co. Galway (Concannon 2007) and Gola, Co. Donegal (Aalen and Brody 1969).

From an insider perspective, the North Road begins at sea level beside the harbour and ends at Clare Island Lighthouse. The lighthouse, built in 1806 and decommissioned in 1965 (O'Grady 2007), is now a high end guesthouse and an orientation point for hikers and day-trippers. This light was once a constant nightly reference point and illuminated cottage windows as far away as Achill Island (Böll 2011 [1957], 58). There are fewer houses along the North Road, and much of this part of the island is taken up by bog and hill commonage. It is fitting that this part of the island includes the gently paced cottage-industry of Ballytoughey Loom, and Macalla Farm with its organic horticulture and yoga retreats. The large tract of commonage divides the island in two and is marked by a stone wall that runs the length from east to west. This boundary wall was built between 1895 and 1901 as part of the reorganisation of Clare Island farmland under the Congested Districts Board (hereafter CDB) (Whelan 1999). The wall, along with other smaller boundaries, is a visible reminder of the impact of the Board on the island's cultural landscape (Feehan 2019, 258). In the twenty-first century the commonage remains undeveloped and, along with its Neolithic appearance, presents a contrast to the lived spaces of modern island life.

All the features along the West and North roads are particular to Clare Island. However, they also represent categories of human development found on other islands. Archaeologist Paul Gosling remarks on the "striking degree of sameness" in the settlement history of all the Irish islands:

> One can invariably expect a scatter of Neolithic and/or Early Bronze Age settlement, some physical traces of early Christianity . . . a pre-Reformation medieval church and graveyard, a tower house (castle), little historical documentation prior to the nineteenth century, a signal tower and in the modern era, language change, population decline and/or abandonment. (2007, 30)

From this perspective, the Clare Island human landscape shares many features with island communities around the coast.

The Quay

The area around the harbour at the east side of the island represents another central hub of island life. Islanders refer to this area, the Quay, as a distinct locale but it is not an official townland and the electoral register lists residents of the Quay as being in the townland of Glen. Three townlands converge at this part of the island and enclose the wider Quay area. Glen stretches westwards and into a small valley at the foot of Glen Hill, while Faunglass and Capnagower spread across on a series of drumlins overlooking the greater harbour area. In the small area around the Quay (less than half a square kilometre) one finds most of the tourist accommodation, the island's two public bars, and the primary sites of State funding.

As with the mainland port at Roonagh, the Quay area marks a gateway into and out from the island. Every year thousands of tourists, and tens of thousands of tonnes of goods, pass through this location. This is the one part of the island that all tourists encounter and for some the only area they explore. In the 1950s, anthropologist Jane Walsh observed that the Quay formed part of a psychological binary in island life and suggests that, "the Quay is the hub of island secular life as the Chapel is of its spiritual life" (1958, 64). Although some of the commercial focus once attached to the Quay moved westwards with the shop and post office, the area remains central to the social structure of the island and for islanders' connection to the outside world.

Mason describes landing on Clare Island in the 1930s and his impressions of the Quay area:

> Geographically this area is the only hospitable landing point on an otherwise rocky shored and cliff-bound island. The grim square tower of Granuaile's Castle is on a green peninsula overlooking the harbour, near which a few small houses and one larger building, the Granuaile Hotel, are clustered together in a hollow where they are protected from the strong westerly wind. (1936, 41)

While there are many differences between island life in 1936 and the present, there are certain outward appearances of continuity. The Granuaile Hotel is now a Bed and Breakfast, but Granuaile's Castle—a sixteenth century O'Malley clan tower (Chambers 2018; Cook 2004)—remains a focal point for the cluster of buildings and harbours that form the Quay. The natural harbour area includes a stretch of sandy beach and the harbour waters are protected in the lee of the island from the prevailing southwest winds and Atlantic swells. The harbour itself is formed from a series of developments including a nineteenth century slipway and inner quays, a 1980's pier extension, and the large new pier constructed in 2006.

Island harbours share many similarities, and at "boat time" are centres of bustle and excitement. Chuck Kruger's description of the mail boat landing at the island harbour in Cape

Clear, Co. Cork could easily describe the arrival of the ferry at the harbour on Clare island. This description is particularly noteworthy as this same vessel (Naomh Ciarán II) was subsequently purchased by the Clare Island based O'Malley Ferry Company and serviced Clare Island for several years:

> As the mail boat docks and unloads, the chaos and the fun begin—if you're not in a hurry, that is. Two local lads leap to the pier from beside the wheelhouse before the boat has been made fast. Once the ropes have been looped over the bollards, pulled taut from the ship, and cleated, a mate unbolts the starboard stern deck door, swings it open, secures it, and out file the hodgepodge of passengers, up the concrete steps, into the mass of vehicles (usually one or two idling, since the salt in the penetrating winds, consequent swift corrosion, and the general damp don't guarantee a quick start). Visitors and islanders alike slowly thread their way off the pier or eventually climb into one of the cars or vans and wait for the traffic jam to untangle. (1994, 8–9)

Walking up from the harbour on Clare Island one first passes Granuaile House Bed and Breakfast, which until 1998 housed McCabe's bar. Next door, alongside private dwellings, are several tourist services. In succession one passes the bike hire shop, the island taxi service, The Lodge self-catering accommodation, and a privately run heritage centre. At the Y junction marking the beginnings of the West and North roads is O'Grady's Guest Accommodation. From this point one can access the beach or continue three-hundred metres along the North Road before turning off to the Clare Island Community Centre. The Community Centre provides office space for the local development company, a sports hall, a library, and a public bar. Two-hundred and fifty metres further on along this lower Capnagower road, one passes the combined structure of the Sailor's Bar and Restaurant and Go Explore Hostel. From 1964 to 2012, this same building was the location of the Bay View Hotel.

This short stretch of road, leading from the pier and circling around the beach and harbour, is relatively quiet during the winter but comes alive from May to September with tourists and musicians. It was along this road, or sometimes along the beach, that I walked to scores of music-making events during the 2017 fieldwork period. On many other occasions I drove this way with a van full of musical equipment while performing at, hosting, or facilitating various events.

3. Chapter outlines

Building upon this Introduction, Chapter One refines the ethnographic and intellectual framework of the research project. The chapter begins with an ethnomusicological description of music as a social process and outlines music-making as a means for representing community activities. Alongside this synopsis of the methodological framework, I include a discussion of issues surrounding ethnographic insiderness. Through a deep level insiderness, the ethnography includes perspectives developed through socialisation within the island community. As the insider perspective is threaded through this dissertation, it warrants some theoretical analysis. The remainder of Chapter One presents a literature review of the Irish islands and Clare Island. The main purpose of this review is to situate Clare Island within the literature on Irish islands and ethnographic research in Ireland. Additionally, this discussion of the literature also builds upon themes outlined in this Introduction, particularly cultural representations of Irish islandness.

Chapter Two presents a detailed analysis of the ethnographic field site of Clare Island music-making in 2017. This expands the description of Clare Island from the Introduction and focuses on the experience of island life within the physical environment. Through anthropological, sociological and historical analysis, Chapter Two reveals enduring frames of community life over the last eighty years. This investigation reveals that population size, community buildings and seasonal changes play an important role in shaping music-making and social life. The chapter concludes with a survey of performances and the contexts of music-making during the summer of 2017. Taken together, the first two chapters introduce the contextual details of islander experience and music-making on Clare Island in the twenty-first century.

Moving from these broader discussions of the ethnographic field, Chapters Three and Four analyse concrete examples of island music-making. Both chapters take a thematic approach and focus the ethnographic narrative through specific music events taking place in the two public bars in 2017. Both chapters also centre around an ethnomusicological account of music-making in the present and draw upon the research presented in Chapters One and Two to contextualise the island experience. This context is embedded in environmental, technological and sociological changes occurring over the ethnographic timeframe.

Chapter Three examines the weekly Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (henceforth CCÉ) concerts taking place at the Community Centre bar during July and August 2017. This traditional music series, or Seisiún, was a community driven event and the primary outlet for

traditional music performance on Clare Island during the period of research. The 2017 Seisiún provides a backdrop for examining community spaces, participatory activities and the social significance of dancing on Clare Island. These topics in turn invite an analysis of changing traditions and music-making practices on the island since the 1950s.

Chapter Four moves the ethnographic narrative from the Community Centre to the tourism focused business of the Sailor's Bar. Using the example of the Sailor's Bar singer-songwriter concert series (also taking place in July and August 2017), the chapter illustrates the influence of popular culture, tourism and individual enterprise in island music-making. Similar to Chapter Three, the analysis of current practice includes a discussion of historical change. The Sailor's Bar connects—both through its architecture and owner relationship—to the development of modern tourism on the island in the 1960s. Alongside the discussions in Chapter Three, this inquiry depicts the changes and continuities in island music making over the last fifty years. The dissertation closes with a final concluding chapter that draws together the findings from the research.

This Introduction outlines the research question, the project aims and the physical space of Clare Island. The next chapter expands the interrogative lens to examine the theoretical underpinnings of the project and to contextualise the subsequent analysis of Clare Island music-making.

Chapter One
An Irish Island: Methodology, Literature and Islandness

Introduction

In his 2010 guide to ethnographic theory and practice, Raymond Madden states that, "one of the first commitments one makes as an ethnographer is to make a field; we must engage in this particular and disciplined form of place-making we call fieldwork" (2010, 38). An ethnographic field is therefore a product of scholarly necessity; it demarcates a boundary for inquiry and rationally controls "the thought process of an ethnographer" (2010, 39). Even small communities have broad domains of interaction and an ethnographic field creates a practical limit for investigation.

Islands have been used to frame anthropologically orientated research since the late nineteenth century (Ashley 2001; Eriksen 1993; Jones and Steer 2009; Royle 2014). Although an island neatly demarcates human activity within geographical space, it does not automatically constitute an ethnographic field. Writing in the introduction to *Island Musics* (2004), Kevin Dawe suggests that island geography implies similar boundaries to island cultural life, thus making them "tempting and convenient units for study. One can after all draw a neat line around them on a map" (2004, 8). However, the essays in Dawe's edited volume demonstrate the fluid nature of island boundaries and the inability to draw neat lines around island cultures.

Chapter One sets out the intellectual environment of this project; this includes the theoretical tools, the academic literature and the cultural discourse that guides the ethnographic research. The chapter can be divided in three broad parts. The first part (section one) sets the boundaries and theoretical foundations of this musical ethnography. This describes the utility of music-making and ethnography as tools for examining island life. The second part (which includes section two and three) introduces cultural discourse surrounding the Irish islands and ethnographic research about island communities. Taken together, these sections contextualise the research project within the literature and outline broader perceptions of island life. The third part of this chapter (section four) surveys research and literature directly related to Clare Island. Literature relating to Clare Island connects to the wider body of literature on Irish islands but also sets the historical background of island life in the twentieth century.

There are two primary aims running through the entire chapter. The first is to set the parameters of the research project. These parameters are defined by the theoretical underpinnings of the research and the existing literature on Irish islands. The second aim in this chapter is to examine the cultural construction of islandness within an Irish context. Irish political discourse, literature and popular imaginings construct a narrative of island life that stands separate from the experience of island life. This complex and changing narrative of Irish islandness surrounds the community on Clare Island and plays an important part in setting out the ethnographic field. Although island life and music-making are tied to specific geographic spaces—such as Clare Island—the perception of island community vitality is entwined in this broader (symbolic) "thinking about" (Cohen 2001 [1985], 98) islandness.

1. Framing the research field

This first section describes the conceptual tools and analytical frameworks used in the research project. It introduces key theoretical terms while establishing the particular definition of music-making applied in this research. The section begins with a focused discussion of ethnomusicological theory and describes music-making as a lens for analysing cultural life on Clare Island. Following this, I discuss pertinent aspects of insider ethnography as it relates to the study, and representation, of island life.

Music-making

This research examines music on Clare Island as a constellation of social and cultural practices connecting all areas of community life in the modern period. This is an ethnomusicological perspective (Barz and Cooley 2008; Stone 2008) which considers music as a social process as much as a cultural product. Philip Bohlman explains that ethnomusicology takes music as a means of representing all aspects of human culture and society. Therefore, the ethnomusicologist studies music to:

> understand more about cultural contexts, about ideology and politics, about the ways in which language functions, about gender and sexuality, and about the identities of cultures ranging from the smallest group to the most powerful nation. The point is not so much that ethnomusicologists study all these things in and of themselves, but rather that they study music in order to understand all these other things. (2005, 205)

An ethnomusicological perspective allows an interpretation of music within island culture and as island culture. Through this approach, I propose that music performance on Clare Island represents and articulates a wider experience of island life.

In her study of musical practices in Milton Keynes, Ruth Finnegan sets out to examine the "special frame drawn around particular sounds and their overt social enactment" (2007 [1989], 7). Finnegan's method is a focus on musical practices, or music-making, rather than musical texts (2007 [1989], 8). Her analysis of music-making parallels my own aims of examining music on Clare Island as an integrated part of community social activity. Christopher Small (1998) adopts a similar, broad perspective of music-making in social life. Small is more deliberate in his theorising and proposes the term *musicking* (as present participle of the verb 'to music') to describe the varied social activities that encompass the production of musical sounds. Despite this somewhat clunky neologism, Small provides a useful definition of this expansive view of music as a social process:

> To music is to take part, in any capacity in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composition), or by dancing. We might at times even extend its meaning to what the person is doing who takes the tickets at the door or the hefty men who shift the piano and the drums or the roadies who set up the instruments and carry out the sound checks or the cleaners who clean up after everyone else has gone. They, too, are all contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance. (1998, 9)

I use the term music-making to describe an approach that is a combination of both Finnegan's and Small's frameworks, with particular focus in this research on music as a social activity. Music-making refers to the practices, contexts, and settings through which the island community encounters musical sounds. This definition of music-making is the overall frame from which this ethnographic field is delimited. This research presents music-making as an ethnographic field, but also reveals music-making as a synonym for island culture and the intangible quality known as islandness. Since music-making connects to multiple areas of island life, I propose that music-making on Clare Island is a marker of overall community vitality. In this dissertation I use the term music-making to denote an expansive perspective of music as a social activity. Music-making also encompasses the more common usage of the term music to denote musical sounds. In practical terms music-making refers not only to the sounds produced at an island event but the entire range of social practices that envelop the performance and incorporates everything from audience behaviours, to the ferry journey which transports musicians to the island.

In twenty-first century Irish life, musical sounds and performance are tied to ideas of leisure, pastime and entertainment. Erik Barnouw and Catherine Kirkland describe entertainment as a highly commercial and commodified practice developed by mass-media and the culture industries. They define entertainment as "any narrative, performance, or other experience, that can be sold to and enjoyed by large and heterogeneous groups of people" (50, 1992). Music-making as entertainment is therefore a marketable commodity and a business. Entertainment industry standards represent a capitalist-cosmopolitan perspective of what music-making is and what roles it has in modern society. But it is difficult to measure music-making on Clare Island by standards associated with culture and entertainment industries. Music-making on Clare Island is not overtly commercial and there are no concert halls, theatres or music clubs on the island. There are a limited variety of genres presented and for most of the year there are no public performances. Generally, music-making supports social gatherings on the island and is rarely the singular focus of an event.

Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino asserts that a narrow perspective of music as entertainment and art form oversimplifies several distinct activities under the one heading. Turino states that because "we have the one word—music—it is a trick of the English language that we tend to think of music making as a single art form" (2008, 23*).* As a corrective to this idea, he presents a conceptual framework (2008; 2009) for analysing different social practices melded together in the Western concept of music. Turino begins by separating the activities surrounding audio recordings of music from those surrounding live performances. Building upon Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social field (1985), Turino further separates live and recorded music according to their social function and application. Through this dissection he develops a model that describes four distinct musical practices, or fields, of music: participatory performance, presentational performance, high-fidelity recording and studio-audio art. This four-field model encompasses all forms of musical sounds but identifies different sets of economic, artistic, cultural, technological and social practices muddled together under the label of music.

The four-field model describes musical activities based on a series of loose designations rather than fixed categories. High-fidelity recording and studio-audio art describe two extremes of social activity surrounding recorded music. High-fidelity recording describes recording that indexes live performance and studio-audio art describes recorded music that is itself a product of recording technology. While all recorded sounds share underlying qualities, there are crucial differences in the methods and aims of the two recording fields:

> High fidelity refers to the making of recordings that are intended to index or be iconic of live performance. While high fidelity recordings are connected to live performance in a variety of ways, special recording techniques and practices are necessary to make this connection evident in the sound of the recording, and additional artistic roles—including the recordist, producers, and engineers—also help delineate high fidelity as a separate field of practice. Studio audio art involves the creation and manipulation of sounds in a studio or on a computer to create a recorded art object . . . that is not intended to represent real time performance. (2008, 26)

The two fields of live music—participatory performance and presentational performance—also represent either ends of a continuum. The primary goal in participatory performance is social interaction and musical sounds facilitate this social bonding:

> Briefly defined, participatory performance is a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role. (ibid)

At the other end of the continuum, presentational performance places the musical sounds as the main focus of the music-making activity:

> Presentational performance, in contrast, refers to situations where one group of people, the artists, prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing. (ibid)

Presentational forms of music-making embody ideas of music as art form and concert hall etiquette. Presentational performance presents music as a cultural product separate from social interaction. In contrast, participatory performance blurs the boundaries between audience and performer. A participatory music-making event centres around social interaction and aims to include as many participants as possible. Participatory performance may also include elements of "presentational" staging, and musicians may be distinct from non-musicians, but group participation remains the central goal. Of the four-fields, participatory music-making is the most overtly social. But Turino's model reveals the underlying social function, or social process, that surrounds all forms of music. A clear example of this dictate of function arises when electronic dance music (studio audio art) is the basis for group dancing in a nightclub setting (participatory performance).

From an entertainment industry, or presentational performance, perspective music on Clare Island is similar to music on other islands and small communities throughout Ireland. Similar genres, performance conventions, instruments, and social settings are found throughout rural and off-shore Ireland. Music-making on Clare Island differs from other locations in the particularities of its historical development, its specific set of built resources,

and because of the particular individuals who participate in island music-making and community life. These individuals are in turn shaped by the environmental and historical setting of Clare Island. Participatory music-making on Clare Island represents the interaction of individuals, community and national culture within a defined physical landscape.

Islandness and insider ethnography

A central concern of this research project is that it should reflect the lived experience of the island community. Over the last one hundred years, Clare Island has been subject to many forms of representation and entwined in various narratives at a local and national level. Few of these readings give authority to the insider perspective and some accounts misrepresent features of island life. The academic discipline of Island Studies focuses on revealing such distortions in the literature and Island Studies scholars call for "the study of islands on their own terms" (McCall 1994). Baldachinno suggests that Island Studies functions to redress the dominance of the mainland gaze in representing islands and islanders. Accordingly, Island Studies takes the position of "privileging commentary from the inside out (rather than from the outside in)" (2008, 49). Ethnography has a key role to play in this and is a powerful method for voicing the insider experience of island life and the "metaphysical sensation" that is islandness (Conkling 2007, 200).

In its most literal translation, ethnography means writing about people. It is not only a product of writing but also the process itself and a methodology "whose aim is cultural interpretation" (Hoey 2014, 1). Tim Ingold holds the view that, through the ethnographic method, anthropologically focused research becomes "philosophy with the people in it" (2014, 393); that in essence it is a discipline which attempts to study the conditions and possibilities of being human. Thus, ethnography is writing about people but focused on a process of explanation. It is a means of interpreting information from data and an attempt to ask specific questions about human experience. The actions required by participating (in), observing (of) and writing (about) have altered little since Bronislaw Malinowski's fieldwork on the Trobriand Islands (2014 [1922]). However, there has been a distinct shift in the meaning ascribed to the ethnographic product. From the 1970s onwards, the critique of objectivity in the social sciences brought greater reflexivity in the ethnographic process (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Ruby 1982). James Clifford encapsulates this new disciplinary perspective with the conclusion that ethnographers seek "partial truths" in their descriptions (Clifford and Marcus 1986, 1–26). Therefore, ethnography is a product and a method, but also a process for generating degrees of knowledge about human social and cultural

activities. If anthropological ethnography—as a sophisticated method based on lengthy periods of fieldwork—is but a partial truth of a greater complex reality, this infers a limited authority for other methods of representing island life. Non-ethnographic accounts are at best partial, or at worse distortions of the lived experience of islanders and island communities.

Madden suggests that the ethnographic lens automatically distances the ethnographer from specific place in the construction of an "interrogative space that is mapped onto a geographic locale" (2010, 45). Consequently, in the writing of ethnography one is defining a field that does not "exist beyond the imagination of the ethnographer" (2010, 38). The ethnographer's task is to reduce the complexity of social space into a definable topic. Through the fieldwork method ethnographers are positioned "as social actors within the very cultural phenomena they study" (Barz and Cooley 2008, 4). The insider ethnographer is one who conducts such research within his or her own community and has some pre-existing connection to the field. As social actors, insider ethnographers adopt a professional identity alongside a pre-existing insider identity.

Generally, insider ethnography is regarded as being a more advantageous position to that of an outsider. An outside ethnographer may devote much time and effort to understanding local social dynamics, identifying willing participants, and establishing rapport (Ó Laoire 2003, 129). The insider ethnographer can (in theory) avoid such issues because of pre-existing relationships to and knowledge of the ethnographic field. The insider ethnographer may also have direct access to community perspectives gained through a life time of socialisation. At a macro-level, an insider or native position (Pian 1992) might apply to an ethnographer working within their own country. However, ethnographic research within a small island community invites a more precise definition of levels of insiderness.

If ethnography was a solely professional interaction with social phenomena, then being an insider would only benefit the research. But ethnographers are also human subjects, and insider ethnographers have a private-self within the social setting they investigate. The insider ethnographer can never just be a professional or detached observer. Through ethnographic work in her native Hawaii, Valli Kanuha notes that the insider researcher is "grounded implicitly and situated at all moments in the dual and mutual status of subject-object; she is both the subject of her study and the participant object of her study" (2000, 441). As a result, one can find it difficult to distinguish between insider roles and scholarly perspectives. Many researchers detail the experience of insider ethnography and issues

arising from insider fieldwork (Brayboy and Deyhle 2000; Chiener 2002; Delyser 2001; Kanuha 2000; Labaree 2002; Ó Laoire 2003; Pian 1992). However, as anthropologist Christina Chavez (2008) notes, this rarely extends beyond debate and anecdote. There is little theoretical analysis to guide the insider ethnographer, or to structure insiderness within the ethnographic research.

Issues faced by the insider ethnographer can range from subtle personal dilemmas to more direct methodological issues. Risks associated with insider research come from the turning of the ethnographic lens towards the personal world of the researcher. Boundaries between field and private life can become blurred and ethnographers may encounter ethical and personal issues through their "professionalising [of] the personal" (DeLyser 2001, 446). Even basic methods (observation, photography, recording) can become sensitive issues when the ethnographer researches within the "sacred spaces" of family, home and community (Chavez 2008). The insider ethnographer may have to alter basic fieldwork protocol to compensate for subject-object positionality (Kanuha, 2000) and to support the various social obligations of a home environment. Insider ethnography can alter the authenticity of an interaction or at worse violate in-group behaviour (Brayboy and Deyhle 2000). Following ethnographic research of her own extended family, Chavez notes how interview techniques, recording technologies, and researcher discourse can pose as a "social anomaly in an otherwise natural setting" (2008, 483).

Some scholars (Banks 1998; Chavez 2008; Chiener 2002; Ó Laoire 2003) have criticised the insider positionality attributed to them and the assumptions of insiderness adopted by others. Tenuous bonds and superficial levels of connection can mask the lack of shared socialisation between ethnographer and participants. As recently as 2018, sociologists Andreas Giazitzoglu and Geoff Payne remarked that a lack of precise theory for degrees of insiderness "contributes to the fallacy that all inside ethnographers are essentially involved in the same process" (2018, 1149). They argue for a three-tiered model of insider ethnography that attempts to situate ethnographers in terms of levels, or degrees of insiderness. At the first level of insider ethnography the researcher shares some basic attributes and identity markers with participants. These are often broad categories that give a gloss of insiderness: similarity in age group, gender, ethnicity, social class and nationality. While these attributes may facilitate rapport, they can be superficial. In certain situations, the shared aspects of identity may obscure important differences; such as between an urbanite and islander. At the second level of the model, the ethnographer's connection with participants extends beyond outward

appearance. The ethnographer embodies "a more specific shared cultural capital, and the ability to enact routine collective behaviour, general discourses and core styles in a given cultural field" (2018, 1153). At this level, the ethnographer enters the field already knowing the rules of the social game (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Even though the second level insider differs from participants in ideological perspectives—or other fundamental regards— this type of researcher can convincingly play the role of insider. At the third level of Giazitzoglu and Payne's model, the ethnographer is completely socialised within the field of inquiry and is indistinguishable—on multiple levels—from the ethnographic subjects. This corresponds closely to my own position as an ethnographer on Clare Island. The researcher at this level "actively and creatively participates in the studied group's central behaviour" (2008, 1154) and engages in ethnography from within. Because of pre-existing loyalties, concerns and connections within the field, this may be the trickiest level of insiderness but also the one with most ordinary (natural) rapport with participants.

This model is not comprehensive and overlaps between adjacent levels are conceivable, but it reveals distinctions between different types of insider. The end product of this PhD research is an ethnography which sits on the page, separate from the messy complexities of actual life (Madden 2010, 38). The insiderness of this project was foregrounded in the ethnographic process but is a background voice in the ethnographic product or text. As suggested in the Introduction, the islander ethnographer—Giazitzoglu and Payne's third level insider—can incorporate their experience of being socialised within the island community and incorporate this analytic lens to articulate island life "on its own terms" (McCall 1994). As products of the social groups they study, insider ethnographers can, with critical distance, enrich the analysis of island community.

This section describes the borders of this research project as defined in the theories of music-making, participatory performance and the construction of the ethnographic field. However, the discussion of insider ethnography also acts as a segue into a review of literature about Irish island life and Clare Island. Giazitzoglu and Payne's model measures the ethnographer's potential to describe insider experience (islandness), but it also raises questions about non-insider and non-ethnographic categorisations of island life. Several publications portray the "islands of Ireland" (Mason 1936; McCormick 1974; McNally 1978; Nutan 2005) as if this designation describes a coherent whole. Although these are not ethnographic studies, they reveal a popular assumption that all islands and islanders are similar. This also perpetuates ideas of island community defined solely by geographic

environment and independent of social participation. Nonetheless, as one of the islands of Ireland, Clare Island shares aspects of its history with other island communities and is part of a wider narrative of island life.

2. Island literatures

At a national level, the Irish islands are conceived as a coherent unit. This narrative plays an important part in Clare Island's interactions with the State and the wider public. This section examines the literature relating to Irish islands and introduces key debates surrounding island life over the last one hundred years. This serves to outline the political, social and cultural narratives surrounding the discussion of Irish islands. These narratives are threaded into community life on Clare Island and are central to understanding historical developments in the ethnographic field site. As Irish nationals, islanders are socialised within the wider cultural discourse—or national consciousness—of island life.

Irish islands: political and popular images

Ferriter's 2018 publication *On the Edge: Ireland's Off-Shore Islands: A Modern History* provides a comprehensive and (for this research project) a timely account of the interactions between the Irish State and the islands. Ferriter's research explores the issues facing these off-shore communities since the mid-nineteenth century and examines changing trends in State policy from the 1920s to the present. This history outlines the contradictory narratives of island life (and islandness) that emerged through cultural nationalism, State policy, demographics, artistic representations, and accounts from island communities. Through this work, the off-shore islands are revealed as contested spaces within the history of the Irish nation.

In Ferriter's analysis, early twentieth-century cultural nationalists supported a narrative viewing the islands as sites "containing the essence of an ancient distinctive Irish civilisation worth nurturing and championing" (2018, 2). In the latter part of the nineteenth-century, cultural-nationalists had looked to the Gaelic speaking regions of the west of Ireland as repositories of an indigenous national culture. These isolated western regions were in turn mainland areas to the detached cultural reserves of island life. Fintan O'Toole observes that a logic of unadulterated isolation made islands the epitome of nationalist ideals:

> The idea of an island had a special importance for the independent Irish State that
> was established in 1922. For the young country, the Blasket and Aran islands had,

as well as their echoes of Greek myth, a more specific aura of pre-history. They were part of the creation myth of the Irish State. . . They were a past that would also be a future. Their supposed isolation had preserved them from corruption, kept their aboriginal Irishness intact through the long centuries of foreign rule. (1997, 112)

Declan Kiberd's oft quoted assessment of the English having "invented" Ireland (1995,1) may be reoriented here to consider a similar Irish imagining or invention of the off-shore islands. As O'Toole observes above, cultural nationalists pressed the islands into service as both laboratories and fantasy lands of Gaelic purity. Ferriter suggests that the legacy of this imagining continues into the twenty-first century, as mainland dreams often clash with island realities (2018, 11).

During the twentieth century, this romanticising contrasted with an indifference shown towards island communities by successive Irish governments. State neglect of island communities was in part due to a lack of resources. The off-shore islands represented a disproportionate need for problem solving, bureaucracy and expenditure relative to their population size. Michael Cross and Stephen Nutley in their review of transport services to the Irish islands note that State neglect was often an unfortunate by-product of island geography. Island communities were too far away from centres of power and industry to avail of State services:

> Their insular status automatically renders them 'peripheral' in the simple geographical sense, and this peripherality often translates into economic marginality and neglect by the central political power. (1999, 317)

Unable to provide services to these isolated communities, authorities viewed relocation to the mainland as a practical solution. Stephen Royle notes the pragmatic stance of successive Irish governments in their approach to island issues. Their obligations for alleviating disadvantage "could be done simply by decanting the islands' population into more 'advantaged' locations" (2008, 50). From the 1930s to the 1980s, the State supported population relocation as a practical solution to providing basic infrastructure to islanders. The same peripherality which cultural nationalists saw as evidence of purity, was interpreted by political leaders as a sign of inevitable stagnation and decay. Ferriter reveals how these centralised and dominant narratives influenced island communities. Some, such as Inishturbot, Co. Galway, accepted the proposal of relocation (2018, 120–122). In 1973, the Minister for Transport and Power (Peter Barry) was questioned in Dáil Éireann whether his department intended to provide electricity supply to the neighbouring islands of Clare Island, Inishturk and

Inishbofin. Minister Barry's answer, recorded in Dáil debates on 6 December 1973, reveals the prevailing assumption of the islands as being socially and economically inviable:

> Substantial grants are being provided by the Land Commission to enable the inhabitants of Inisturk to transfer to the mainland, and as the vast majority of the islanders are anxious to move the necessity to install electricity on that island should not arise. I am informed by the Electricity Supply Board that the extension of electricity supply to Clare Island and Inisbofin would be so costly that it would involve completely prohibitive special service charges and it is therefore not a practicable proposition.[1]

Despite such characterisations, Clare Island, Inishturk and Inishbofin all maintained a fulltime resident population. Furthermore, each island received electricity supply during the 1980s. Other island communities were less fortunate and the evacuations of the Blasket Islands, Co. Kerry in 1954 (Ó Cathain 2014), Inishark, Co. Galway in 1960 (Concannon 2007), and Gola, Co. Donegal in 1970 (Aalen and Brody 1969) captured the public imagination and are well documented. But many other island communities quietly flickered out during the middle decades of the twentieth century, including the Inishkea islands, Co. Mayo in 1935 (Dornan 2000), Inishmurray Co. Sligo in 1948 (McGowan 2004), and Achillbeg, Co. Mayo in 1965 (Beaumont 2005). As late as the 1970s, islanders on Tory, Co. Donegal and Inishturk, Co. Mayo were offered relocation to the mainland as a solution to infrastructural issues (Ferriter 2018).

Various governments made limited efforts to ease the conditions of island life but little by way of an integrated islands policy. Some twelve years before Minister Barry's comment above, the *Irish Times* reported on the establishment of an inter-Departmental government committee to examine the conditions facing island communities. This committee set out to "sympathetically" consider key infrastructural needs ("Committee to Examine Islands," *Irish Times*, August 4, 1961) but produced little or no results. Issues facing the off-shore population were further complicated by an uneven governmental approach to island communities based on language usage. Since the early 1960s, islanders within Irish speaking (Gaeltacht) regions availed of grant aid for infrastructural projects, business development and to purchase ferries (Cross and Nutley 1999; Ferriter 2018; Johnson 1979). With access to Gaeltacht funding, some of these islands experienced modernisations twenty years ahead

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[1] "Ceisteann—Questions. Oral Answers. - Mayo Islands Electricity Supply." *Dáil Éireann Debates* Vol. 269 (9), December 6, 1973. https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1973-12-06/12/.

of their English speaking island counterparts. For example, in 1964 Gaeltacht funding provided eighty percent of the materials cost towards the construction of a community centre on Inis Oírr, Co. Galway ("Island Community Centre Opened," *Irish Times*, September 4, 1964). However, the English speaking islanders on Inishturk, Co. Mayo remained without a community building, or even regular ferry service, until the 1990s (Cross and Nutley 1999, 322). Grant aid also permitted several Gaeltacht Islands to install electricity supply in the early 1970s and avail of services that would take over a decade to reach non Gaeltacht Islands such as Clare Island, Inishbofin and Inishturk. Despite these additional supports, Irish speaking islanders continued to face economic and social hardships associated with off-shore life.

Both Ferriter (2018) and Royle (1986; 2008) describe islanders' petitions for services and the development of *Comhdháil na nOileán* (Irish Islands Federation) during the 1980s and 1990s. Through intensive lobbying, islanders secured policy changes designed to protect off-shore communities with equal support for both English and Irish speaking islands. Despite their small populations and lack of economic resources, islands such as Clare Island became "newly minted" with intrinsic national value (Royle 2008, 43). These changes in State perspective increased funding opportunities for island community development (Ferriter 2018, 137) allowing for subsidised ferry services and the construction of community buildings such as the Clare Island community centre in 1999. By the start of the twenty-first century, all off-shore island communities benefitted from much needed infrastructural and financial supports.

During the second decade of the twenty-first century, the Irish islands received a protected status through the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, a government department that describes its mission as being "the protection and presentation of Ireland's heritage and cultural assets".[2] In June 2020, the new Irish government reshuffled administrative structures and responsibility for the islands moved to the Department of Rural and Community Development. But, as the ethnographic fieldwork for this project focuses on 2017 the following discussion of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht remains relevant for highlighting contemporary perspectives.

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[2] "About," n.d. Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, accessed September 14, 2020. https://www.chg.gov.ie/about/.

In 2017, infrastructural funding and governmental representation for the islands was managed directly through the departmental subdivision for the Gaeltacht. Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht islands were represented equally and described on the department website as a coherent whole:

> Our coastal islands are an integral part of the state's heritage. Around 30 of these islands are inhabited and hold a wealth of cultural heritage. A central objective of this Department is to ensure that sustainable vibrant communities continue to live on the Islands.[3]

Using 2016 census figures, the Department website also lists the population of the inhabited offshore islands as 2734 persons. Measured in terms of State demographics, islanders represent a fraction of a percentage of the total population (4,761,865 people in 2016). The rhetoric of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht suggests that these island communities contain a much larger portion in the imagining of national identity and of *Irishness* than suggested by their percentage (0.057%) of the total population.

In conclusion, the period from the 1940s until the 1980s was arguably the low point in relations between the off-shore islands and the Irish State. During this period, islanders faced similar issues to other rural populations such as unemployment, depopulation and stagnation (Brown 2004; Cousins 2003; Gibbons 1996; Lee 1989). However, islanders were doubly marginalised by a lack of basic amenities and services. For example, households in Roonagh (the nearest mainland point to Clare Island) were connected to the national electricity supply grid in 1955,[4] while islanders five kilometres away had to wait until 1983 for a similar service. Clare Islanders also risked their lives crossing to the mainland in small boats and landing at inadequate nineteenth century harbours. Alongside these everyday pressures and dangers, an air of gloom circulated around island life as communities gradually depopulated or were evacuated. In this context, the narrative of Irish islandness gave a pessimistic forecast for the survival of island communities into the twenty-first century.

Writers on islands

Despite increasing coverage of island life from the 1950s onwards, some of the most enduring portrayals of Irish islands come from literary accounts earlier in the century. As

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[3] "Islands," Gaeltacht, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, last modified July 3, 2015. https://www.chg.gov.ie/gaeltacht/islands/.
[4] "Rural Electrification of Askillaun, Co. Mayo in 1955," n.d. ESB Archives, accessed September 24, 2020. https://esbarchives.ie/2016/03/22/rural-electrification-of-askillaun-co-mayo-in-1955/

O'Toole suggests, the depictions of life on the Blasket and Aran islands added to a national "creation myth" (1997, 112) capturing the mental fortitude and self-sufficient attitudes of these island communities. Kiberd proposes that these literary accounts connected Irish intellectuals to an idealised and imaginary island life. In his analysis, intellectuals and "radicals of all kinds" interpreted the islands through these literary works. In this reading of island life "the western island seemed like an ideal commune, a repository of what Gaelic Ireland once was and might become again" (1991, 334).

Scholars continue to debate the literary merit and cultural importance attached to the writings of the Blasket islanders (Ferriter 2018, 272–276; Maher 2008; Nic Craith 2017). While these works are commemorated for their addition to modern Gaelic literature, the Blasket authors also depict a lifestyle common with many small island communities. The autobiographical accounts of Tomás Ó Criomhthain (2000 [1937]), Micheál Ó Gaoithin (2000 [1953]), Muiris Ó Súilleabháin (2000 [1933]) and Peig Sayers (2000 [1962]) describe island community life in terms familiar to islanders around the Irish coastline. The authors narrate themes of relationship to the sea, to community life, and to the mainland in their depictions of island life. Royle suggests that while the Blasket islanders present an important literary legacy, "it must be of less significance than a living heritage" (2003, 24). For island communities the broader story of the Blaskets, not the literary texts themselves, is ultimately a reminder of the existential threats facing island communities:

> Thus, when in the 1980s people still living on Irish islands began to come together to press for the outside support they all needed, the phrase 'don't let what happened to the Blaskets happen to us' was heard. (ibid)

The stories of the Blasket islanders differs from Clare Island in the fact that the Blasket Island community did not survive past the 1950s. Theirs is a portrayal of an abandoned community that, for various reasons, was not sustained.

Despite the prominence of the Blasket authors, most accounts of life on the Irish islands come from outside or mainland observers. Author and playwright John Millington Synge provides one of the first monographs presenting an outsider's perspective of Irish island life. His work *The Aran Islands* (1992 [1907]) resulted from a period of extended visits to the islands and the writing contains ethnographic elements. Scott Ashley (2001) considers Synge's depiction of the Aran islanders as a crossover between literary invention and ethnographic representation. However, as anthropologist John Cowan Messenger points out, unlike an ethnography it is not possible to separate Synge's own personal agendas from his portrayal of islander's perspectives (Messenger 1964, 42).

Throughout the twentieth century the Aran islands remained an important focal point for literary and non-fiction writings centred around themes of islandness: Tim Robinson's evocations of memory and landscape (1990; 1995) and Andrew McNeillie's memoir of a period spent on Aran in 1968 (2002) are examples. A sample of writings about other island communities includes local histories, memories and folklore from Achillbeg, Co. Mayo (Beaumont 2005), Arranmore, Co. Donegal (Ua Cnáimhsí 2009), Bere Island, Co. Cork (O'Sullivan 1992), Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork (Kruger 1994; Lankford 1999), Inishbofin, Co. Galway (Christmas and Labrozzi, 2003; Concannon 1993), Inishfree, Co. Donegal (Duffy 2004), and Inishmurray, Co. Sligo (McGowan 2004; Heraughty 1982). Literature on the Irish islands finds parallels in Scotland, with writers exploring history (Rixson 2001), travel (Haswell-Smith 1996; McIntosh 2016) and folk memory (Neat 2000) on Scottish islands. In his 2013 publication *Island: How Islands Transform the World,* J. Edward Chamberlin expands the survey of islands in literature to the global scale and includes further reference to Irish and Scottish examples.

Numerous travel diaries and guidebooks present general accounts of the Irish islands in terms of both physical geography and human populations. Mason's *The Islands of Ireland: Their Scenery, People, Life and Antiquities* published in 1936 was amongst the earliest works to present the islands as a coherent whole. His writing reveals an idealisation of island life and perpetuates the cultural nationalist myths described by Kiberd and O'Toole. Without ethnographic or genealogical evidence, Mason describes islanders around the Irish coast as being "the remnants of ancient races and . . . gentlefolk in the literal and highest meaning of that phrase" (1936, 2). Writing for a mainland audience, Mason recommends the Irish islands as an antidote to the excesses of modernity:

> I am not sure why islands possess such a fascination for many people, but the fact remains that they do. Artists, literary men and even millionaires, take up their abode on isolated islands and find there a retreat from the clamour and din of modern civilisation, where their spirits can expand, and where the primitive virtues and values of mankind are not swamped in a material world which has, to a large extent, lost its soul. (1936, 1)

Themes of escape and return to nature are common in imagining island spaces (Chamberlin 2013) but for Mason the Irish islands offered an additional benefit of connecting to a national spirit or soul. Despite this romantic sheen, Mason presents useful detail on the living conditions of islanders in the early twentieth century. This travelogue provides brief histories, photographs and observational accounts from a selection of, what Mason describes as, the

most important and interesting of the islands. Alongside substantial entries for the Aran and Blasket Islands, Mason devotes seven pages to describe Clare Island.

From the 1970s onwards a slew of publications continued in this vein as non-islanders documented the prominent aspects of island life for a non-island audience. Authors such as Donald McCormick (1974), Kenneth McNally (1978), Peter Somerville-Large (1999) and David Walsh (2004) summarise the "islands of Ireland" for a general readership and to the prospective visitor. Occasionally the islands are described in terms of smaller or regional groupings such as Wallace Clark's *Donegal Islands* (2003), Michael Cusack's *Croagh Patrick and the Islands of Clew Bay: A Guide to the Edge of Europe* (2016), and *The Inhabited Islands of West Cork* (2012) by Francis Twomey and Tony McGettigan. This category of writing relates little about the living communities and presents islanders as anonymous and timeless.

One work which gives both name and face to island inhabitants is John Carlos's photographic collection *Ireland's Western Islands: Inishbofin, The Aran Islands, Inishturk, Inishark, Clare & Turbot Islands* (2014). The work includes portrait photography of islanders from the 1960s to the present. In the preface he reflects on the aims of his work and articulates a sentiment that carries through many of these publications about island life. For Carlos, the collection "is not an attempt in any way to define the islands or their peoples but rather, to preserve a memory of the islanders and their homelands" (2014, 8). Like Mason in the 1930s, and authors who followed, Carlos sees his role being to depict a way of life that had little means for self-representation. He describes the work as a documentation of "disappearing traditions and culture in a society increasingly consumed by materialism, information technology and celebrity culture" (ibid). There is a suggestion that islands are fragile places easily manipulated or at worse destroyed by modernity. Some three-quarters of a century beforehand Ó Criomhthain articulated a similar perspective in the final lines of his memoir:

> I have done my best to set down the character of the people about me so that some record of us might live after us, for the like of us will never be again. (2000 [1937], 244)

Irish islandness

The Irish islands, and islanders, are enmeshed in narratives juxtaposing centre and periphery. However, centrality is a perspective imagined through discourse as much as objective conditions. The historical connectedness of coastal regions, and the importance of sea travel in early patterns of civilisation, present an alternative perspective of centre and periphery

(Gosling 2007, Kuijt 2015). Considering the archaeological evidence on Irish islands, Gosling observes that contemporary portrayals of islands as remote isolated spaces contrasts with the realities of pre-modern life: "the dramatic watery boundaries that are often seen as impediments to modernity are more likely than hedgerows, hills or streams to have been conduits for cultural change" (2007, 30). For centuries, the islands and coastal regions were connected by the sea and a veritable maritime highway (Cullen and Gill 1992c, 2–5). Against this historical context, the imagery of disconnected island communities emerges as a product of modernity, cultural narratives and the ideological apparatuses of the Irish State. Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1993) argues that the portrayal of islands as disconnected, culturally isolated spaces is a fiction created by modern Western perspectives of centrality. Similar to Cohen's assessment of community (2001 [1985], Eriksen proposes that insularity or islandness is a symbolic rather than a structural construct: "conscious human agency contributes to defining in which respects a society is insular, and in which respects it is not" (1993, 144). This symbolic construction of islandness is not limited to small islands. Islandness is part of the Irish national consciousness and even, at times, a political tool of the State. For example, the economic protectionism and isolationist policies of the early decades of the Irish State (Neary and Ó Gráda 1991; McGarry 2016) were arguably an attempt to reassert the islandness of the nation. The islandness of the Irish off-shore islands are compounded through this national cultural narrative.

Twentieth century Irish popular discourse described the conditions of mainland versus island life, as a dichotomy between modernity and traditional culture. This is encapsulated in E.M. Forster's introductory remarks to Ó Súilleabháin's Blasket Island memoir. Forster describes Ó Súilleabháin's work as "an account of Neolithic civilisation from the inside" (Ó Súilleabháin 2000 [1933], v). While the self-sufficient lifestyle of the Blasket islanders evokes imagery of pre-historic continuity, the islanders' lives were clearly involved in global economic and social flows. The Blasket world view was shaped by emigration and the social and economic potential of life in the United States (Ó Súilleabháin 2000 [1933], 216–220). Along with this diasporic perspective, the local island economy was engaged with international markets through the fishing trade (Ó Criomhthain 2000 [1937], 154–156). These are just two examples of modernity in everyday island life. Luke Gibbons argues that the nineteenth century agonies of famine, immigration and language shift transformed the Irish psyche from a traditional mind set to a modern one (1996, 5). Although the Blasket islanders retained their language, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards Irish islanders—on Clare Island as well as the Blaskets—experienced these same global-flows (Appadurai 1990) and

connections to metropolitan lifestyles (Fagan 2002; Smith 1994) as their mainland counterparts.

Ethnographic research uncovers the complex interactions between island communities and the outside world and supplants the mythologizing of Irish islandness. The next section examines ethnographic studies of Irish islands within anthropology. This a body of work that fits within the broader research parameters of Island Studies and its goal of articulating island life from the inside.

3. Ethnography, islands and music communities

Such is the volume and range of research on islands that an entire academic discipline of Island Studies has emerged. Edited volumes such as *The Routledge International Handbook of Island Studies* (Baldacchino 2018) and *A World of Islands: An Island Studies Reader* (Baldacchino 2007) present an overview of the broad scope of island studies. Royle's *A Geography of Islands: Small Island Insularity* (2001) and *Islands: Nature and Culture* (2014) are also useful introductions to the topic areas in the discipline. Royle outlines the common themes of isolation, peripherality, size, and lack of resources that affect island communities globally. He also frequently addresses the experiences of Irish island communities as they adjust to the demands of life in the late twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Although islands—and island dwellers (human and non-human)—present a wide range of subject areas for scholarly inquiry, this review of the academic literature highlights ethnographic accounts of island life.

Ethnographic work on the Irish islands is tied to the history of ethnography and social anthropology in Ireland and further afield. The islands exist as part of mainland rural regions, and conceptions of island life have a significant parallel to conceptions of life in rural Ireland, particularly along the Western seaboard. In their volume *The Anthropology of Ireland,* Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan consider anthropology to have performed a vital role in the representation of modern Irish life. In the twentieth century, the ethnographic method was a means of recording the experience of Irish life separated from idealisations and grounded in local communities:

> This 'bottom-up' approach to people, ideas, behaviours, institutions, places and
> spaces is not the sole domain of anthropology, but, due to the field's reliance on
> ethnography as the principal framework for the collection and analysis of data,
> anthropology has relied on longer case studies of people who are often seen to be

peripheral, or at least less significant, to the research designs of our cognate disciplines. (2006, 5)

In the opening pages of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Malinowski introduces both the foundational principles of modern ethnography and the quintessential image of an anthropologist arriving onto an island. His perspective is that of a mainlander, beginning from the outside and moving inwards from the shoreline:

Imagine yourself suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village, while the launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight. (2014 [1922], 3)

Malinowski's fieldwork on the Trobriand Islands highlights the centrality of island research in the development of modern anthropology and the ethnographic method. Other early island ethnographic studies include Margaret Mead's research on the Samoan island of Taʻū (1943 [1929]) and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown's work on the Andaman Islands (1922). As an island nation, Ireland also featured strongly in this early period of modern anthropological ethnography.

Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball's pioneering anthropological research in rural Co. Clare, published as *Family and Community in Ireland* (1940), was the first modern ethnography of Irish life (Byrne, Edmondson and Varley, 2015). As a product of ethnographic observation and fieldwork, this monograph remains a valuable account of life in the period. However, Arensberg and Kimball's theoretical paradigms biased their interpretations of the data. Through a structuralist-functionalist lens, Co. Clare became a representative sample (1940, ix) of a rural Ireland defined by adherence to tradition, communal reciprocity and family structure. Continuing in this vein, subsequent anthropological studies sought to measure how rural life was declining in relation to these base ideals of family and community. Less flattering accounts emerged that characterised rural communities as being rife with issues of sexual repression (Messenger 1969), social decay (Brody 1973) and endemic mental health issues (Scheper-Hughes 2001 [1979]).

While anthropological research has played an important role in the perception of Irishness, these earlier ethnographies distorted local particularities into representative studies. Since the 1980s—and the revaluation of ethnography as a method for creating "partial truths" (Clifford 1986)—anthropological research has uncovered the local (or subcultural) versions of Ireland subsumed under broader notions of national coherence. Wilson and Donnan suggest that recent decades of anthropological work reveal Ireland not as a singular entity but as a collection of different individuals, communities, organisations and "Irelands" (2006,

137). Anthropologist Adam Kaul, writing of his own fieldwork experiences in Co. Clare in the early 2000s, observes that ethnographic field sites are rich in the full range of human experience and ultimately full of narrative contradictions:

> For local people, things were always more complex. Life during 'the old days' was described to me by the people who lived through it in terms that Arensberg, Kimball, Brody, Messenger, and Scheper-Hughes would all agree on: it was lovely. It was harsh. It was worse. It was better. There was a strong sense of community. Society was falling apart at the seams. All true to the people who lived life then and remember it now. (2009, 24)

Nonetheless, despite their generalisations of complex realities, these early ethnographic studies are still relevant in their detail of rural life.

Ethnographic research on Irish islands

The body of ethnographic literature on Irish islands is small and much of this work focuses on the Irish speaking islands of Co. Galway and Co. Donegal. Alfred Cort Haddon and Charles R. Browne's "The Ethnography of the Aran Islands, County Galway" from 1891 represents an early attempt towards an anthropological account of island life. While this research is marred by the pseudo-scientific aims of craniometry and anthropometry (Walsh 2013), it also records the conditions of island life. Ashley (2001) suggests that Haddon and Browne's research connects with Synge's writings to form a proto-ethnography of island life. Throughout the 1890s, Browne continued to document islanders around the Irish coast and visited Clare Island in 1896. His findings from this visit were published in 1898 as "The Ethnography of Clare Island and Inishturk, Co. Mayo".

It was not until the 1950s that Irish islands became sites for contemporary ethnographic fieldwork. Messenger's research on Inis Oirr, Co. Galway was both an early contribution to anthropological research in Ireland, and is cited as the first such work on an Irish island (Wilson and Donnan 2006; Scheper-Hughes 2001 [1979], 23). Messenger describes the research as being the third such ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Ireland, and the subsequent monograph places the study of the islands early in the history of Irish social anthropology. Following a year of fieldwork in 1959/1960—and with several shorter visits between 1961 and 1966—Messenger published *Inis Beag: Isle of Ireland* (1969) a comprehensive account of island life. This cosmology of islandness focused on the annual cycle of events in the community and the constituent parts of island life. However, his unflattering portrayal of island life and of sexually repressed islanders generated controversy after its publication (Wilson and Donnan 2006, 45, 170–171).

Despite criticisms of his interpretations, Messenger's work usefully deconstructs idealised conceptions of island life. He notes the contrasts between cultural nationalist discourse and his ethnographic fieldwork observations. In the 1969 monograph, he criticises Irish primitivistic and nativistic evaluations which obscure the realities of community and cultural life on the western islands (1969, 3–5). Messenger considers ethnographic fieldwork as the only valid method to accurately, or objectively, assess the qualities of islandness. In an earlier article on the same topic, he outlines the deficiencies of popular (non-ethnographic) accounts in their limited exposure to the field site and lack of research precision:

> First of all, most writers and film producers who have interpreted the Aran milieu have been unskilled observers, at least from the point of view of modern ethnography. Secondly, visitors have seldom resided for long periods in the islands, nor have they been concerned with sampling procedures. Synge based his book and play, and the plots of two other plays on but 90 days of experience in one of the small islands, Inishmaan, and this was a far longer exposure to Aran life than has been customary among writers. Also, he lived there only between the months of May and October during visits from 1898 to 1901; very few observers have witnessed the round of winter activities, which contrasts sharply with the summer round. (1964, 42–43)

Messenger might direct these objections to all non-ethnographic accounts of the islands of Ireland. Aside from his argument for ethnographic objectivity, Messenger's work inadvertently highlights three key aspects of insider or islander perspective: he reveals that islanders do not conform to mainland (Irish) imaging or imagination; he indicates the importance of seasonality in the experience of island life; and finally—although his above comments apply to all fieldwork settings—he suggests that there is an experiential aspect of islandness accessible only by direct and prolonged engagement. While Messenger's islanders remain as anonymous peasants, they emerge through the work as more complex and modern than the gentle, ancient folk (Mason 1936, 2) of earlier depictions.

Published in the same year as Messenger's monograph, F.H. Aalen and Hugh Brody's *Gola: The Life and Last Days of an Island Community* (1969) provides a contemporaneous account of the depopulation and eventual abandonment of Gola Island. Though not strictly an ethnography of island life, the work presents a useful analysis of the conditions surrounding life on this Co. Donegal island. However, similar to Brody's residents of *Inishkillane* (1973), Gola islanders appear as anonymous social actors with little capacity for self-direction. In Aalen and Brody's analysis, this island community is shaped by social and economic forces outside of their control. Robin Fox's research on Tory Island (1978) presents a similar reading but confines the study to "social structure rather than culture" (1978, ix). Rather than focusing on living community, Fox romanticises the ethnographic field as presenting a "semi-

fossilised history" (1978, x). Coming before the reflexive turn in anthropology, these studies share a common thread and present island life as a singular category. The islanders depicted by Messenger (1969) and Fox (1978) are similar to the country people presented by Brody (1973) and Scheper-Hughes (2001 [1979]). As Wilson and Donnan note, the authors portray the ethnographic locals as being less than individual agents:

> The subjects of this research became in large part its objects: 'classic' traditional, repressed, anomic, ignorant and sexist peasants, whose local community life and culture were out of control and out of their hands. (2006, 24)

Recent decades of anthropological research in Ireland presents a more nuanced portrayal of rural community. Adrian Peace's monograph *A World of Fine Difference: The Social Architecture of a Modern Irish Village* (2001) exemplifies contemporary approaches. The locals who inhabit this Co. Clare village are independent and active agents fully involved in modern world systems.

Islands and musical ethnographies

An example of contemporary ethnographic fieldwork in an island setting is presented in Lillis Ó Laoire's research on Tory, Co. Donegal. His 2005 monograph *On a Rock in the Middle of the Ocean: Songs and Singers in Tory Island, Ireland* examines music-making both as a cultural process within the community and a way of exploring islandness. This 2005 edition is a translation of an earlier publication in the Irish language *Ar Chreag i Lár na Farraige: Amhráin agus Amhránaithe i dToraigh* (2002). In its ethnomusicological aims, Ó Laoire's work sets a different tone to Fox's earlier research on Tory and to Messenger's ethnographic work on Inis Oirr. However, the work also differs in the insider position of Ó Laoire's connection to the island community. Having grown up on the nearby Co. Donegal mainland, Ó Laoire approaches fieldwork on Tory as a semi-insider. Where possible he voices the ethnography from the islander's perspective and cites participants as co-authors to the study (2005, viii). Throughout the text Ó Laoire presents island culture and social structure as embedded in personal histories and group experiences. Through this work the Tory islanders appear as individuals with the capacity for self-representation.

Ó Laoire's account of music-making and island life offers useful parallels to the study of music-making on Clare Island. The analysis of song and dance on Tory reveals how music-making can embody the specific geographic, historical, and infrastructural influences that shape the community. Furthermore, Ó Laoire asserts the role of music in maintaining island community. On Tory, both singing and the social institution of dancing provide the

island community with a psycho-social strength to endure the hardships of such an isolated lifestyle. Ó Laoire's work also offers an overview of island life and universal themes in modern island living: the structures of island-time and the qualities of islandness; the divisions of pastime from subsistence labour; the problematic relationship (physically and culturally) with the sea and the mainland; important episodes of both historical and recent importance; and something of the character, disposition, outlook and genealogy of the Tory islanders.

Alongside Ó Laoire's work on Tory, Deirdre Ní Chonghaile's (2010) history of Irish traditional music and music collection on the Aran Islands provides the bulk of this output. While her work is primarily a historiography, it includes ethnographic elements and expands the narrative of music-making on Irish islands. Ní Chonghaile (2014; 2016) also reveals the influence of non-islanders in representing and characterising island cultural practices. She demonstrates how historical representations of music-making on the islands are "dominated by the perspective of the visitor, whose relationship with Aran and with the sights and sounds of Aran is different to that of the islander" (2014, 43). This assertion fits into a broader question of island representation, and particularly the twentieth century literary caricatures described earlier. Despite detailed work by Ó Laoire and Ní Chonghaile, there are no other published examples of research examining music-making on Irish islands.

Musical ethnographies of Irish mainland communities offer additional context for examining shared elements of rural and island life. Kaul's research in Doolin, Co. Clare resonates with several aspects of music-making and community life on Clare Island in the twenty-first century. His monograph *Turning the Tune: Traditional Music, Tourism, and Social Change in an Irish Village* (2009) examines music-making, modernity, change and tourism in a small community setting. Although the scale of Doolin's music-making and tourism industry are different, many of the economic and social circumstances are similar to those on Clare Island. For example, Kaul's discussion of the seasonality of labour, income and music-making (2009, 29) corresponds with the Clare Island experience. I examine other pertinent examples and parallels with Kaul's work in later chapters. Other works, such as Henry Glassie's *Passing the Time in Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community* (1982), provide additional context for examining traditional Irish music culture and rural community life.

In contrast to the scant material on Irish islands, a substantial number of musical ethnographies explore island genres and music-making on islands around the globe. The

edited volumes *Island Musics* (Dawe 2004) and *Island Songs: A Global Repertoire* (Baldacchino 2011) summarise the range and approaches used in the study of island music cultures, while *Musical Islands: Exploring Connections Between Music, Place and Research* (Mackinlay, Bartleet, and Barney 2009) expands the context to include musical subcultures as metaphorical examples of islandness. Much of the ethnographic work on island music-making concentrates on island nations and larger protectorates in the Caribbean (Austerlitz 1997; Averill 1997, Guilbault 1993; Miller 2007) Pacific (Becker 1980; Moyle 2007) and Mediterranean (Bithell 2007; Dawe 2007; Lortat-Jacob 1995). The islands of Scotland provide a closer parallel to the smaller communities found on the Irish islands. Music research on Scottish islands includes Peter Cooke's (1986) examination of the fiddle tradition on the Shetland island group, Ray Burnett and Kathryn Burnett's (2011) study of Hebridean song traditions, and Samuel Ward's (2015) ethnographic research of social dancing on the small island of Fèina (pseudonym). Although it is not musical ethnography, Cohen's ethnographic research on the Shetland islands deserves special mention. His research on the island of Whalsay (1987) articulates the conditions of island life, but also informed his analysis of community (2001 [1985])—as examined in the Introduction.

This overview of the ethnographic literature presents the central themes and research topics in the examination of island life and island music-making. Clare Island sits within this body of scholarly inquiry but also forms its own sub-heading in the study of islands. Clare Island is both part of a wider network of island research and a distinct geographical and cultural space.

4. Clare Island literature and research

This section provides a literature review of Clare Island (as a field of study) but also outlines the intellectual milieu interacting with the island community. Literature on Clare Island ranges from scholarly research to non-academic publications. Also included in this review is a discussion of pertinent recordings (audio and visual) which inform the ethnographic research. Some of this work—in particular the Royal Irish Academy Surveys—forms part of community discourse in the twenty-first century. Therefore, this literature review also introduces background features of current community perspectives.

Royal Irish Academy Surveys

Between 1909 and 1911 the Royal Irish Academy (henceforth RIA) conducted a comprehensive multidisciplinary survey of Clare Island and surrounding areas (Collins 1999). Under the direction of renowned Irish naturalist Robert Lloyd Praeger (2014 [1937]) over one hundred researchers examined Clare Island across a range of disciplines including archaeology, botany, geology, place names, and zoology. The RIA published the findings in 67 volumes under the title *A Biological Survey of Clare Island, in the County of Mayo, Ireland and of the Adjoining District* (Royal Irish Academy 1911). This survey represents a significant contribution to the study of islands and the natural sciences. Royle observes that this research was one of the most wide-ranging surveys every attempted making "the isolated Clare Island at the mouth of Clew Bay in the west of Ireland the most intensively studied area of the globe" (2014, 90).

In 1990, the RIA launched a follow-up survey to expand upon the original survey findings. The first volume of the *New Survey of Clare Island* was published in 1999 and investigated additional subject areas such as history, folk life and the cultural landscape (Mac Cárthaigh and Whelan 1999). Almost thirty years after its launch, findings from the *New Survey* are still being published by the RIA. As of September 2020 this amounts to nine volumes of new research. Writing in the 2019 companion volume to the *New Survey*, John Feehan draws attention to the exceptional body of knowledge compiled about Clare Island:

> As a result of the attention brought to bear on the island through these surveys, no area of comparable size anywhere in Ireland—and indeed perhaps anywhere in the world—can claim to be known in such detail. (2019, 282)

Despite their research scope, neither survey examines community social activity or music-making. Feehan introduces islander viewpoints in the companion volume, but most of the research includes no ethnographic evidence. The island community is presented in terms of folk life and material culture, but records little of islander perspectives.

In the early 1990s several publications emerged as precursors to the second RIA survey findings. These offer shorter introductions to the subject areas of the original survey and to the intellectual milieu of the *New Survey*. Ciara Cullen and Peter Gill of the Clare Island Centre for Island Studies (CICIS), published a five-volume series (Cullen and Gill 1992) of short field-guides to Clare Island history, archaeology, customs, and also including an overview of the 1909–1911 Survey. The CICIS is no longer active, but it played an important role in facilitating the research of RIA *New Survey* participants in the 1990s. As a psychologist, Gill has published elsewhere on aspects of island life with specific emphasis on

education on Clare island (Gill and Stenlund 2008; Gill 2017) and exploring the concept of island psyche (1994); his work will be addressed later in this dissertation. Other noteworthy articles from the early 1990s include Gosling's "The Archaeology of Clare Island, Co. Mayo" (1990) and Timothy Collins' accounts (1990; 1994) of annual Island Studies symposia weekends organised by the CICIS.

The *New Survey of Clare Island* emphasises the central role of the CDB in reshaping the island's social landscape (Whelan 1999). Following the purchase of Clare Island by the CDB in 1895, the island underwent a five-year period of social, economic and agricultural restructuring. The CDB work on Clare Island was part of a wider project of support for the impoverished, or congested, districts of the West of Ireland. Feehan outlines the approaches of the CDB following its establishment in 1891:

> The CDB promoted widespread infrastructural development and the modernisation of agriculture; proper rotations with good seeds, and new and better breeds of animals were introduced. New harbours, piers, roads and railways were built. It initiated a plethora of projects to extend education, industry and co-operation, as well as better standards of health, diet and hygiene. (2019, 252)

On Clare Island, the CDB initiated a rapid period of modernisation and reconfiguring of the human environment. The island community was physically restructured through the construction of new houses, outbuildings, boundary walls and the redistribution of agricultural land. Feehan describes how this restructuring cleared the island's landscape of earlier nineteenth century settlement patterns (2019, 261–62) and reconfigured community space into its current layout:

> The island's townlands were completely remodelled. The striped land was confined to the new seven townlands of Strake, Kill, Glen, Fawnglas, Capnagower, Maum and Ballytoughey Beg. (2019, 258)

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the work of the CDB had redesigned Clare Island into a model of rural modernity. Kevin Whelan suggests that the success of the Clare Island project made it a "showpiece" for the work of the CDB (1999, 88). However, despite modernisations the island community continued to face social issues such as poverty and illiteracy (Whelan 1999, 90–91). He notes that the continued visibility of famine-era tillage patterns remained as a metaphor of Clare Island's layered history and incomplete modernisation: "The older rundale arrangements retains a spectral presence under the newly rationalised landscape" (1999, 73). Clare Island entered the twentieth century as an island at a transition point between tradition and rational modernity, but also as a space with marked layers of development. This forward momentum froze under the Irish Free State and the

island community entered a transitional or liminal state. Writing in the 1999, Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh suggests that the lack of Irish State investment in Clare Island from the 1920s to the 1990s had, "almost certainly allowed for a greater continuity in the island's folk life than might otherwise have been the case" (Mac Cárthaigh 1999, 70).

Like other Irish islands, Clare Island faced decades of State neglect and staggered modernisations (Ferriter 2018). However, Whelan notes that Clare Island's earlier historical developments and changes under the CDB are "evidence of a different evolution to that of the other large inhabited islands off the west coast of Ireland" (1999, 91). As a showpiece for the CDB and a laboratory for the ground breaking RIA survey (1909–1911), Clare Island entered the twentieth century as a model of progress and integration into the modern world. However, with the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, the off-shore islands were the focal point for different ideological ends. From this point on, the Blasket and Aran Islands presented the image of an unadulterated past that could guide the development of a uniquely Irish and independent State (O'Toole 1997, 112).

Ethnographic research on Clare Island

As mentioned, Browne visited Clare Island in 1896 a year after it was purchased by the CDB. His research presents some insight into the physical characteristics, living conditions, customs, cultural practices and character of the islanders. Despite the shortcomings of his methodological approaches (referenced earlier) his account—alongside CDB reports—helps to build a picture of island life in the period (Feehan 2018). In his discussion of islander "psychology" Browne makes noteworthy observations on issues of ethnographic representation in this pre-Malinowskian ethnography:

> A stranger and visitor to the islands can only get a very slight glimpse of the people's character, and naturally the best side is the one which is most likely to be shown him. For other things he has to depend on local informants, and local prejudices are apt to influence these; so the recorder has to sift and weigh carefully before accepting all he hears. (1898, 58)

Brown also makes interesting blanket statements about community character. The islanders are typified as a singular communal body:

> To the casual visitor the people are decidedly attractive. Like all dwellers in out-of-the-way places, they are somewhat shy of and suspicious of strangers at first; after the crust is broken, they are kind, obliging, and communicative. With each other they are rather social, and given to joking and laughing, and they seem to have a rather keen sense of the ludicrous. They are very excitable, and said to be somewhat quarrelsome at times . . . They are decidedly talkative, especially among themselves. Drunkenness may be said to be unknown. They are very kindly to one another in times of trouble or distress. (Ibid)

In the twenty-first century, several of these traits continue to be attributed to island community life; most notably the assumption that islanders help each other in times of trouble or distress. In a 2013 survey of Clare Islanders, seventy percent of respondents (out of one hundred questionnaires) cited community spirit and neighbourliness as a positive aspect of island life (Wrafter 2013)

Despite the comprehensive approach of the RIA Survey 1909–1911, it was not until the 1950s that modern ethnographic research was conducted in the community. Walsh's ethnographic fieldwork—conducted during 1956 and 1957—details social life on Clare Island and provides valuable accounts of music-making in that decade. Her doctoral dissertation, titled *The Social Organisation of an Island Community in Western Ireland: Clare Island, Co Mayo,* examines the structural and functional position of social activity (dancing and visiting) as survival mechanisms in what she interpreted as a dying island community. Though unpublished, Walsh's research belongs fully to the history of social anthropology in Ireland. It adds to the scant body of work on Irish islands and presents interesting contradictions to subsequent published research. For example, Walsh's perspective of island life, and her presentation of more open attitudes towards sex, contrast with Messenger's interpretations on Inis Oirr (1969). However, the structural-functionalist framework limits the research and Walsh draws false conclusions about the viability of the island community. Her analysis projected that the community was on an inevitable downward spiral and the island was within decades of being uninhabited:

> Clare is an island which has all the indications of being a dying community; a steady drift away from the community by the young people in search of a higher standard of living; a rapid decline in population; a shortage of people in the 20–40 age group, and a predominance of aged people (38% of the total population on Clare are over fifty years old); a lack of marriage and consequently of young children to replace those dying or emigrating; small, incomplete families, and a lack of social life. (1958, 383)

Walsh regards these issues as signs of certain extinction: "Unless the reasons for the decrease in population, emigration and lack of marriage, disappear, the decline of the island culture and its eventual extinction are inevitable" (1958, 389). Many of these issues continue to feature in island life in the twenty-first century and are permanent topics in small-community life.

Despite its incorrect predictions, Walsh's work is invaluable for her participatory observations and accounts gathered during her periods of fieldwork. The dissertation includes substantial quotes and comments from islanders, and develops a comprehensive picture of

community life. Most importantly for this research project, Walsh accords music and house dances as one of the primary structures in community life. It is also important to note that the fieldwork material presented by Walsh corresponds to the childhood experiences of many older islanders in 2017. Her descriptions of house dances, dances in the parish hall, the island pub-culture of the 1950s, and the use of media technology provides a valuable baseline for this current research.

Between Walsh's fieldwork in the 1950s and the beginnings of the second RIA survey in the 1990s, there was little academic research conducted on Clare Island. The notable exception is D. J. Dwyer's 1963 journal article examining agricultural and farming practices on the island. In keeping with perspectives of island life in the period, Dwyer presents a picture of a failing social life as a confirmation of downward trends:

> On Clare Island lives a relatively isolated farming community self-sufficient to a high degree. Life is hard because of the climate and poor soils, and amenities are lacking because of the island's situation. In winter Clare Island may be cut off from the mainland for up to two weeks at a time by bad weather, and there are few compensations for its isolation. The hotel . . . has few amenities (not even a bar) for the islanders or for summer visitors who might broaden the restricted basis of the islanders' life and provide an extra source of income for them. It is thus not surprising that emigration from Clare Island has been both heavy and continuing, despite government direct and indirect financial assistance to the islanders with the object of curbing it. (1963, 266)

Whether because of omission, or a cursory reading of the social environment, this account presents inaccurate information. Dwyer conducted the fieldwork portion of the study in August 1956, and although tourism was not a significant industry on the island at the time, there was a bar. While the island population continued to decline until 1966, by the time Dwyer published this article (1963) a new hotel was under construction and the tourist industry was being developed (detailed in Chapter Four). Although such errors may be minor to the aims of an agricultural survey, they distort the picture of community and the resilience of island life in the period. The voices of academics such as Dwyer, Walsh and Messenger combined with the evacuation of island communities—the Blaskets in 1954 and Inishark in 1960—presented evidence of the unsustainability of island life. However, these generalised explanations fail to account for the endurance and stability of community life on Clare Island (and other islands) throughout the twentieth century.

Folklore, fiction and film

Unlike the Blaskets, Clare Island did not produce a body of native literature and little by way of published first person narrative. One exception is Jackie O'Grady's account of growing up on Clare Island and his career as a lighthouse keeper. O'Grady initially published this memoir as a shorter article in the folklore journal *Béaloideas* (2007) and later as a book *The Green Road to the Lighthouse* (2008). However, this first-hand account is confined to recollections of island life in the 1940s before O'Grady migrated from the island.

Although there is a lack of biographical works, several edited collections present folklore and social history gathered from islanders. Father Ned Crosby (Clare Island's last resident priest 2000–2002) published a collection of personal histories, folklore, island poetry and photographs gathered from every family and household on the island. *Glimpses of Clare Island* (2004) is a valuable archive of folk and social life on Clare Island in the twentieth century and provides genealogical and historical facts gathered from community memory. Two other similar but shorter collections were compiled as part of local employment and training initiatives. Anna Burns' *A Time to Remember: Stories and Recitations from Clare Island* (2001) and Donal Moran's *Out on the Ocean: Clare Island Music, Song and Recitation* (2012) combine with Crosby's collection to round out a community scripted cultural history. A series of folklore interviews were conducted on Clare Island as part of the Clew Bay Folklore Collecting Scheme 2004–2009 some of this was published in the collection *Clew Bay folklore: Béaloideas Chuan Mó* (Mac Cárthaigh 2009).

A less substantial but interesting account of Clare Island comes from literary fiction. The island is firmly associated with Grace O'Malley, or Granuaile, a sixteenth-century clan leader, sailor, pirate, and proto-feminist figure. Clare Island features as a backdrop for fantasies, historical, and romantic novels centring on this near mythical but entirely historical figure. The most notable works are: Ann Chamber's *Grace O'Malley: The Biography of Ireland's Pirate Queen 1530–1603.* (2018); Judith Cook's *Pirate Queen: The Life of Grace O'Malley, 1530–1603* (2004), and Michael Murpurgo's children's book *The Ghost of Grania O'Malley* (1997). Other novels set on Clare Island often incorporate the Granuaile story somewhere into the plot line (Gill 1996; Weddell 2019). Clare Island also features in several collections of poetry, further adding to the allure of islandness. In the title poem from "Sailing to an Island" (1963), Richard Murphy has Clare Island as his original destination, while Séan Lysaght (1991) presents a full volume interpreting the 1909–1911 RIA survey. As part of a public art commission, Jim Vaughan and Macdara Woods collaborated on *Clare*

Island: This Time This Place (2007) using photography and poetry to explore island life in the twenty-first century. Most travel writings about Irish islands also include a section on Clare Island (Carlos 2014; Mason 1936; McCormick 1974; McNally 1978; Nutan 2005; Ritsema 1999; Sommerville-Large 1999; Walsh 2004).

Filmmaker Bob Quinn's 1966 documentary *Horizon: The Island* is an important record of community life on Clare Island. This black and white film was commissioned by the Irish national broadcast agency RTÉ (Raidió Teilifís Éireann). Although only twenty-nine minutes long, it features several islanders speaking on (and off) camera and displays a wide range of island activities. While many of the island characters have since passed away, the footage includes some islanders who took part in this ethnographic research. Three factors make Quinn's work stand out from subsequent programmes filmed on the island. The first point to note is the ethnographic style of the documentary which is narrated through the voices of islanders. Secondly, this film is the earliest audio-visual material from Clare Island and marks a turning point in representations of island life. From the 1970s onwards there is an increase in photographic, moving image and audio recordings on Clare Island by locals, visitors and professional bodies.

A last point to note about the 1966 documentary is Quinn's familiarity with the community and his later decision to make a feature length film on the island. Although scripted as a work of fiction, the community portrait and the setting of *Budawanny* (1987) blurs distinctions between fiction and ethnographic film. Alongside a handful of professional actors, Quinn cast islanders in roles and scenes which approximated island life in the period. For example, a scene of set-dancing in McCabe's bar is representative of participants and practices in the mid-1980s. Writing in the *Cinema Journal,* Jerry White notes the specific reference to Clare Island life and suggests that the film reveals the "collision of modernity and tradition" on the island:

> Throughout the film, Quinn goes out of his way, although not too far, to show us how different life on Clare Island is from urban Ireland . . . For Quinn, Clare Island is where the struggles of modern societies are being hashed out, where people seek cultural and spiritual autonomy at the same time as they incorporate modernity. (2003, 110)

In 2013, the inaugural edition of the Clare Island Film Festival was dedicated to Quinn's films. This 2013 festival was organised by young islanders involved in the film industry, but in subsequent years has grown to incorporate a wider section of the community.

Records of Clare Island music

In 1942, Brian Mc Loughlin of the Irish Folklore Commission collected material on Clare Island. Although this work is a valuable archival addition—and records several island social customs—it presents little to illuminate music-making practices on the island in the twentieth century. Folklorist Tom Munnelly (2001) visited Clare Island in 1973 and recorded songs from several islanders. These recordings of island singers are also available in the National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin but, as with the 1942 collection, provide little insight into music-making as a community activity. Although audio recordings (or transcriptions) can convey information about island music and musicians, they express little of community music-making (as defined in this research project). This same point holds true for commercial audio recordings featuring island musicians. In the early 1990s, Castlebar musician John Hoban recorded a double cassette album of islanders singing, reciting poetry and playing music. More recently, several islanders have recorded studio albums ranging from: traditional music by Billy Gallagher *Clare Island in Mayo* (2010); traditional songs by Patrick O'Toole *Clare Island of Yore* (2014); popular song covers by Sharon O'Grady *On the Crest of a Wave: Sharon O'Grady and friends, Clare Island* (2017); and, original rock music by Niall McCabe *Part of the Light* (2013) and *The Village Hall* (2018). As with the earlier folklore recordings by Munnelly, these albums focus primarily on music as a product and—in the more recent examples—on the process of High-fidelity recording (Turino 2008, 26). Although some of this recorded material features in live performances on Clare Island, the recordings themselves are not wholly representative of island music-making in 2017.

Written accounts of island social life are more illuminating of music-making practices than audio recordings of music performance. Writing in his 1926 travel diary Claude Wall, an outdoor enthusiast and founder member of Irish Mountaineering Club, describes a week spent on Clare Island at the end of August. Having made the acquaintance of some young islanders Wall joined the group in attending a local visiting-house:

> Later in the evening, I went down with the boys and girls of the house to Nurse Higgins, an eccentric old lady, who provided plenty of fun in dancing hornpipes and singing ballads in the most absurd way possible. They danced "sets" and, I am sorry to say a considerable amount of "jazz" to the strains of a gramophone. It was a rollicking evening and we did not leave until half-past twelve for a much needed rest. (Wall 2012, 61)

This brief mention shows that islanders included both traditional and contemporary popular music in their social gatherings. Islanders were also, to some degree, engaging with modern

technologies (the gramophone) in their music-making. While this diarist provides a small glimpse of music-making from 1926, there are almost no contemporary accounts of music-making on Clare Island during the first half of the twentieth century. Walsh's ethnography (1958) presents the first substantial account of island music-making prior to this present study.

Conclusion

Chapter One establishes the intellectual context for this research project and refines key concepts and terms used in the dissertation. The first section sets out important methodological concerns permeating the ethnographic research. This examination outlines music-making and participatory performance (Turino 2008) as analytical tools for examining islandness and assessing community vitality. From here the discussion outlined some relevant debates surrounding insider ethnography. Insider, or islander, ethnography plays a subtle but central role in this research and supports the aim of Island Studies to study islands from the inside, or "on their own terms" (McCall 1994).

The remainder of Chapter One (sections two, three and four) presents a review of literature, discourse and research surrounding the Irish islands. This review includes historical debate, literary works, travel writing and ethnographic research on the Irish islands and on Clare Island. Several important points emerge from this investigation. Firstly, the extant literature presents Irish islandness as a category, myth or stereotype within national culture. The stereotype of Irish islandness is characterised by a narrative of material poverty and cultural wealth. In popular discourse, the islands are imagined as fragile but valuable resources of Irish cultural heritage. Secondly, the literature presents island communities as liminal spaces separate from mainland Irish life. While islands are undoubtedly a distinct topographical category, the concept of island communities as remote (or isolated) is problematic (Eriksen 1993). Both from an historical perspective (Gosling 2007, Kuijt 2015) and from an insider (islander) viewpoint islands are central hubs connected to other spaces. The third point emerging from the literature is that the primary methods for measuring islandness (ethnography and insider experience) are largely absent from an otherwise detailed body of research and writings about island life. The RIA surveys present an enormous body of research on Clare Island—perhaps more than any other Irish island. Yet this work contributes little to understanding the experience of community life and nothing of the mechanisms of island vitality (as defined in this research).

Chapter Two corrects some of these deficiencies and examines the experience of life on Clare Island from the perspective of the local community and environment. This ethnographic detail enriches the literature but also challenges some popular assumptions, or myths, about island life presented in Chapter One. Through Chapter Two, music-making emerges both as a tool for examining various parts of island life and as a key component in maintaining island vitality.

Chapter Two

People, Places, Schedules and Seasons: Music-Making on Clare Island in the Twenty-First Century

Introduction

Anthony Seeger advises that ethnomusicological research should begin with an exploration of the total framework of the music-making environment:

> by investigating the journalistic questions "what", "where", "how", "when", "by whom", "to whom", "why" and the like. The answer to these questions will provide an ethnography of musical performance with which any analysis should begin. (1979, 376)

Following this suggestion, this chapter will answer the fundamental questions of who, where, what and when of Clare Island music-making in the twenty-first century. This Chapter will also provide a basis for examining the "why" of Clare Island music-making in Chapters Three and Four.

This chapter examines the framework and constituent parts of Clare Island music-making in the twenty-first century. Divided into discussions of population, seasonality, performance spaces, and types of participants at music-making events, the chapter also includes a survey of music-making conducted in 2017 as part of my ethnographic fieldwork. The aim of this chapter is to reveal the particular conditions of Clare Island music-making and how it represents islandness in the twenty-first century. The ethnographic present of this research is the fieldwork year of 2017, but the descriptions are typical of annual events from 2012 through to 2019. Certain features of Clare Island music-making in 2017 have a much longer history and, where relevant, the discussion expands to include this historical analysis.

1. People

While islands may influence artistic temperaments, they do not produce music or any other cultural artefacts. Ethnomusicologist John Blacking observes that "all music is folk, in the sense that music cannot be transmitted or have meaning without associations between people" (1973, x). Therefore, a study of music-making on an island requires a study of islanders and the island population.

Population and community

The empirical measurements available through census figures present an important starting point for analysis of the ethnographic field. However, a discussion of population figures also introduces some dominant narrative themes relevant to Irish island-life over the last one hundred years. As noted in Chapter One, the narrative of island population decline is a widely acknowledged theme and commentary on Clare Island often notes the rapid decline from a high of 1,615 in 1841 to 845 in 1851, followed by a steady decrease over the next one hundred years (Dwyer, 1963; Ferriter 2018, 14; Mac Cárthaigh 1999, 41). All the Irish off-shore islands experienced a similar dramatic post-Famine decline and gradual depopulation throughout the twentieth century (Royle 2008). But these nineteenth century population highs are not within the experience of Clare Island life in the twenty-first century. The oldest research participants in this ethnographic study were born in the 1930s, and their earliest recollections are from the 1940s. As an ethnographic project, this shorter timeframe (from the 1940s onwards) represents the lived experience of population change within the community.

In terms of empirical data, the 1926 census represents the limits of community memory in 2017 and presents a relevant ethnographic frame for examining population changes on Clare Island. Although the oldest participants in this research project were born in 1932, the 1926 census was the first record of citizens in the Irish Free State and provides an additional symbolic frame work for analysis. The first twenty years of Free State census figures for Clare Island show a gradual decline in population. The 1926 census records 378 people, by 1936 this figure had fallen to 361 and the 1946 census records 310 people. However, in the following twenty-year period the community witnessed a more dramatic drop from 310 (in 1946) to 167 (in 1966). On Clare Island, each of the five-year census periods between 1946 and 1966 records a steady fall in population with a decrease of between 30 and 40 individuals per count. In this twenty-year period the population fell by some 142 individuals, almost halving in a generation. This post-war decline matches trends at a national level both in terms of migration from rural to urban areas (Brown 2004, 245) and overseas emigration. The relative stability of Clare Island's population from the mid-1960s onwards also correlates with the low point (and levelling off) recorded in the 1961 national census (Brown 2004, 383).

The 46.13% population decline between the 1940s and 1960s affected the experience of island-life and music-making. Although the island population has remained relatively stable

since the 1960s, islanders still experience the echoes of this decline. Islander Chris O'Grady[5] (born 1932) recalls the impact this had on his generation:

> There was a lot of young people on the island at that time; that was immediately after the war years and throughout the war years . . . But then of course emigration . . . the gates were opened up as far as going into England was concerned and most of the younger lads—that went to school with me, a lot of them, all of them indeed apart from the likes of Chris O'Leary and Myles Ruddy and a few more like that—all went to England. And that left an awful hole in the island as far as music was concerned, because . . . once the younger generation of the island moved out the life of the island sort of came to a sad end really.

While all existing Irish off-shore communities witnessed population decline between 1946 and 1966, census figures suggest that few of the other large islands experienced such a dramatic decrease (Bere Island, Co Cork is a notable exception). The neighbouring island communities on Inishturk, Co. Mayo and Inishbofin, Co. Galway remained more stable in their decline. Between 1946 and 1966, Inishturk's population fell by 26.4% (from 125 to 92) while in the same period on Inishbofin it dropped 27.14% (from 339 to 247). In the fifty-year period from the 1966 to 2016 census, the Clare Island population fluctuated within a relatively stable range of 127 (in 1981) and 168 people (in 2011). These fluctuations tell different stories when measured in terms of statistical percentages and community life, but overall the figures show that from the 1960s onwards Clare Islanders have experienced relative stability. For over fifty years the current population range has proven socially viable and islanders under sixty years of age have no memory of a larger community grouping.

This population range of 127 to 168 people invites comparison to theories of optimal social group size. Communities of this size correlate with theories of egalitarian, face-to-face human groups (Shepard 1998) denoted by social bands and tribes (Diamond 2005, 267–273). Anthropologist Robin Dunbar (1996) posits a theory that human social groupings are, from the perspective of evolutionary history, optimised to accommodate approximately 150 individuals. Dunbar suggests that this figure, referred to as Dunbar's Number, represents the upper limit for meaningful interpersonal relationships. While some anthropologists have criticised the theoretical underpinnings (De Ruiter, Weston and Lyon 2011), it is important to

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[5] Ethnographic interviewees are identified by their full name during their first mention in both every chapter and subheading. Participants are then referred to by their first name. In certain cases, interviewees full names may appear following a change of topic within a subheading. Any deviation from this general format reflects decisions of narrative clarity. Full details of the ethnographic interviews are listed in the bibliography.

note the close level of community interaction and sociability suggested in Dunbar's analysis. The Clare Island population reflects some assertions made in Dunbar's claims:

> The figure of 150 seems to represent the maximum number of individuals with whom we can have a genuinely social relationship, the kind of relationship that goes with knowing who they are and how they relate to us. Putting it another way, it's the number of people you would not feel embarrassed about joining uninvited for a drink if you happened to bump into them in a bar. (1996, 77)

The community on Clare Island is fully modern, but the population size engenders close social bonds similar to earlier sociological concepts of organic community (Cohen 2001 [1985], 21–28) or *gemeinshaft* (Tonnies 1957 [1887]). However, in 2017, many islanders experience the interplay between local community and urban society as a consistent part of their lives. Some, such as Erik Mac Giolla, embody the complex interactions of a small community with the wider world. Erik has joint Irish and Swedish heritage and after completing a degree in psychology at NUI Galway he moved to Sweden for postgraduate work at the University of Gothenburg. Following a decade of travelling back and forth from Sweden to Clare Island, Erik has precise opinions about the attractions of island life and the practical qualities of an island community in the twenty-first century. He contrasts the common experiences of urban living with the minority perspective presented by small island life:

> I think in the apartment block I live in, there's about as many people that live on Clare Island. So it's not a particularly big apartment block by Swedish standards. And I'd recognise maybe thirty of the people and I'd know maybe ten of them by name. So that's like . . . that's a large social alienation from people who are proximally just a few metres away from you. Whereas on Clare Island it's the reverse. You know everyone by name, or at least you know which family they belong to. I don't think it's just the small community. It's definitely a fact that it's a small community, but the *lack of social alienation* is almost forced upon you by the fact that you are going to meet everyone. For example, on the boat, or in the pub, or in the church, or wherever these meeting places are. Or at the Christmas concert. So you're forced to interact with everyone, and you then see them more as people rather than just these . . . these neighbours that you might never speak to, sort of thing.

Erik suggests that the combined limitations of small community and island living can have a positive impact. Social participation is forced upon individuals through social proximity and the intimate structures of island social life. The "lack of social alienation" heightens the experience of music-making as a form of social participation.

A second point raised in examining the current island population is the constant change in the experience of community size. The 2016 census figures records 159 residents with 84 males and 75 females. But from an islander's perspective, these figures vary depending on the particular weekday, the month, or year, as many aspects of island life operate at seasonal intervals. Some islanders, such as Erik, live a bifurcated existence (Gill 2017, 33) travelling in and out of the community to meet changing patterns of employment. As employment is scarce on the island many young people move to regional sites such as Westport, Co. Mayo or Galway City yet maintain a strong social connection with the island, returning for weekends, community events and holiday periods. These arrangements shift yearly as employment opportunities, romantic partnerships, and changing family circumstances create different levels of commitment to, or away from, the island. Some islanders who live permanently on the mainland also maintain a presence within the island community and participate in major communal gatherings. Islander Padraic O'Malley describes these fluctuations in terms of demographics, seasonal variables and the effects of migration for education:

> I always think that November and December are honest assessments of your population . . . like on a Monday night in November and December. That's really your functioning population . . . I remember there in November one particular night I was [counting], I couldn't find one male or female under the age of thirty and older than national school age on the Island . . . I think, on a Monday night if we've a hundred people on the island or a little bit more there's not much more than that [in winter] . . . So your vibrant group tends to be away during the week and come back at weekends.

These fluctuations become part of an ebb-and-flow in island life that moves on annual, seasonal and weekly cycles. Islanders balance their isolated setting with high levels of mobility, but many remote rural communities face similar challenges in their connection to services and modern lifestyle choices. Brody's Inishkillane (1973) describes the challenges faced by small communities in their attempts to reconcile the expectations of urban modernity in rural life. For islanders, the sea journey is an extra obstacle to the mobility required in modern living. This manifests directly through the limitations of the ferry schedule and its susceptibility to changes in the weather, discussed in detail later in this chapter.

A final point, and a crucial perspective in understanding music-making and islandness on Clare Island, is that the numbers involved in any gathering are small by urban standards. Islanders sense of proportion is tied to the framework of the population. This may seem too

obvious a factor, but the perspective of size is one that can skew others. For example, a gathering of one hundred islanders attending the annual Christmas concert by the national school children represents nearly 63% of the total population. A similar turnout in the local town of Westport (2016 population 6198) would require a gathering of nearly four thousand people. With this perspective, it is possible to assess island events in terms of audience as a percentage of population. While an event on Clare Island with a scant eight participants might appear as poorly attended, such figures must be assessed in terms of the potential audience available. Similarly, the number of music-makers (and participants of all types) on Clare Island is small. This will be apparent throughout the dissertation as the same names and participant voices appear in different island contexts.

Who are islanders?

By a narrow form of logical deduction, an islander is one who lives on an island. Robinson Crusoe (Defoe 1994 [1719]) gained his islander status through misfortune and became one of the most famous islanders in the English speaking world. But there is more to being a Clare Islander than merely existing in the environment. One is a Clare Islander in relation to an historically framed and dynamic social group, or community, known as Clare Island. Through her fieldwork in the Scottish Hebrides, Tamara Kohn (2002) suggests that being an islander is not only an ascribed status, but one that comes from an embodied identity derived through interactions with the social body of the island. In Kohn's analysis, participation becomes a stronger identity marker than inherited or symbolic traits such as family name or place of birth (2002, 151). Kohn observes that the act of participating is what maintains community life into the future: "The island past that people will remember in the future will be made of action." (2002, 155). Ultimately, Kohn regards being an islander as a shared way of acting and interacting in situations and events.

Writing about "island psyche" Gill (1994) suggests that there is a geographical imperative to islander identity, and that the schema of islandness is "experientially determined rather than culturally conferred" (Gill 1994, 285). An islander, or a member of the Clare Island community, might then be defined in terms of degrees of interaction over extended periods of time and across various areas of island life. While such questions appear tangential to this ethnographic project, the high degree of mobility in twenty-first century island life presents interesting points for debate about community interactions. By Kohn's and Gill's analysis, a holiday-home owner who makes occasional visits is not considered an islander, even if they are socially active during their stays. But also a non-resident (islander or

mainlander) who makes regular, influential contributions to community life must be counted in an assessment of community vitality. Those born into the community are endowed with a symbolic-capital (Bourdieu 1986) of islandness, but such categorisation (birth right) does not reflect the entire Clare Island community in 2017. Up to twenty percent of the fulltime resident population in 2017 were born into other locales; many of these moved for marriage and some as a lifestyle choice.

For some, the question of birth right is a moot point in determining island identity in the twenty-first century. Older Clare Islanders suggest that in the last fifty years, modernisation has created a complete disjuncture in the experience of island life. Cyril McCabe articulates this perspective in unambiguous terms, stating that in 2017 there are no real differences between living on the island and living anywhere else in rural Ireland. He suggests that, at a practical level, twenty-first century islanders have better access to some State services than many small communities on the mainland:

> We have everything on the island they have on the mainland. We are lacking nothing on the islands . . . The only thing about island life now is that kids go out to school on a Monday and back on Saturday, that's the only difference [between island and mainland living] . . . Ok, you might miss a day or you might miss a [boat] run in the evening, but you get the next boat in the morning. Or . . . if you get sick you're not going to worry about it because the helicopter will have you picked up so fast . . . you're getting picked up now quicker for the hospital from the islands than you are on the mainland . . . it's no longer a cut off area.

Cyril also suggests that these improvements are accompanied by fundamental changes in islander psychology. In his opinion, constant deprivation engendered a stoic resourcefulness in islander's outlook on life. Hardship and thrift were part of the islander mind set in the past:

> Island life used to be, in a lot of ways, doing without things because you couldn't have them. Island life . . . was an attitude because of the fact that you could get cut-off, where you had this little bit of water to cross, and that's not a problem anymore. . . You don't get cut off for weeks the way we use to. I remember getting cut off for three weeks; no boat for three weeks. Nobody fussed, nobody died, nobody died of starvation definitely because everybody had loads of stuff. They all had their own potatoes, vegetables, meat, milk, butter, you know.

He proposes that in recent decades there is a move away from self-sufficiency and from connection to the local environment. This infers that twenty-first century islanders are more alienated from their environment than in the past. In Cyril's youth, islanders relied more on

their own efforts (both physical and mental) and ingenuity to negotiate the world at a structural level.

Cyril's comments suggest that both hardship and determination marked the island psyche (Gill 1994) and its embodied community identity (Kohn 2002). The autobiographical accounts of Blasket islanders Ó Criomhthain (2000 [1937]) and Ó Súilleabháin (2000 [1933]) describe constant physical exertion on land and at sea. Much of this effort was spent in daily survival, but transverses all areas of personal and community life. Robin Flower, in his foreword to Ó Criomhthain's biography, offers the following insightful observations about life on the Blasket Islands and the mental resilience developed through adversity:

> Life on such an island, where there are no shops and no craftsmen at call, develops an all-round competence in the individual to which our specialised civilisations afford no parallel. The experience of these islanders is necessarily narrow in its range, but within that range it is absolute and complete. At sea and on the hill, in the house, in the field, or on the strand, they must at all times be prepared for every event. There is at all times a narrow margin between them and famine or violent death, and their faculties are keener for that. (Ó Criomhthain 2000 [1937], viii)

Flower's comments describe an experience of living common to all islanders for much of the twentieth century. Speaking in an interview for Quinn's 1966 documentary on Clare Island, islander Michael Joe O'Malley made a similar observation about the precarity of island life. In his estimation, these constant challenges had an overall positive effect on islander mentality. Michael is questioned (off camera) as to his opinion of specific traits of island life:

> Well, any overall quality or trait or attribute that people have here? . . . The only thing that comes into my mind is that wherever these people went they had joy, they had happiness . . . that they would be happy wherever they went . . . That's what strikes me about people here. And, I would say that part of the reason for that is, they have, in a sense, a posthumous existence. They play with death in currachs[6] and . . . they appreciate life better afterwards. (Quinn 1966)

In a physically demanding and often dangerous environment, dependence on community was essential; one could only increase individual productivity by including other people. As noted by Ó Laoire on Tory (2005, 34–37), this reliance on neighbours and community extended beyond the realms of work and into pastime and music-making.

As outlined in the dissertation Introduction, some of the most far-reaching social and technological changes in Clare Island's history occurred within living memory. Broadly, this

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[6] A currach is a small, open wooden boat used along the West coast of Ireland and was a primary form of transport. In the documentary Michael Joe O'Malley is shown fishing for lobsters in a currach. This is a practice which continues on Clare Island to the present. See Mac Cárthaigh (2008, 505) for further discussion.

encompasses the period from the 1940s to the present, but many of the most significant infrastructural developments happened between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s. This period saw an increase in telecommunications, electrical goods, automobiles, and ferry services in island life. From the 1980s onwards, islander perspective incorporated the fresh possibilities offered by infrastructural developments. German Jörg Zengel first visited Clare Island in the mid-1970s, purchased a house on the island in 1990, and took up fulltime residence in 2013. As a regular visitor and witness to the changes and developments in island life during the period, he observes that "changes which happened in Germany over one hundred years happened on Clare Island in ten" (Field Notes, 23 November 2019). While the history of modernisation in Ireland and Germany are not comparable, Jörg accurately captures the rapidity of such modernisations on Clare Island. New links with mainland resources shifted the focus of community life; increasing connection to the mainland and decreasing reliance on the local. All of these changes impacted the existing music-making practices on the island.

In 2017 it is possible to live on Clare Island and experience little of the embodied identity or group interactions (Kohn 2002) which dominated island life throughout the twentieth century. One can, except for the minor inconvenience of a twenty-minute ferry journey, live a life fully aligned to mainland desires and distanced from the geographic imperative of islandness (Gill 1994). However, this is a comparative perspective measured against the hardships of island life in the past. Despite modernisations, island life retains particular demands marked by isolation, self-reliance and connection to the physical environment. Participation remains an essential component for community vitality. In a small-island setting, individual members often have a significant, even disproportionate, impact. Benedict Anderson in his popular work on nationalism observes that, "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them" (2006 [1983], 6). But unlike the symbolic connections supporting the larger imagined communities of nation and State, direct interpersonal connection remains central in small island communities. Island vitality arises both through individual action and participation in group activity. In his ethnographic work on an unidentified Scottish island, Ward (2015) considers how small-island communities remain closely linked through direct action. He suggests that small-island communities are, from a theoretical perspective, best described using Etienne Wenger's idea of a community of practice. Ward defines community of practice as expressed through:

mutual engagement (the act of everyone working together, harmoniously or not), joint enterprise (an ongoing, common purpose—rarely stated or achieved in any final sense) and shared repertoire (a collection of notions and actions that a group adopts and utilises). (2015, 44)

Kohn (2002) makes a similar observation suggesting that being an islander—or becoming a member of the island community—is a product of social action; one becomes an islander by participating within the group. Some Clare Islanders express similar opinions on the central role of participation in sustaining community and island vitality. Island shopkeeper and postmaster Padraic O'Malley, is an active member in many island community groups and explains his lifelong motivation to participate in community life:

> When I was 20 [in 1989], growing up here I always felt that . . . and I think lots of people of that group at the time, that you had to participate. That you didn't have a community without participation.

He perceives a greater imbalance in recent years between active participants and less interested islanders. In Padraic's opinion there are a cohort of islanders who remain actively engaged in community while others rarely participate in community events:

> But, I think now there's people who you don't seem to get as much . . . they live in the community, but maybe they're not as active publicly in the community either socially or even in the groups or whatever.

It is apparent that the changes in island life over the last twenty-years (as described in the preceding pages) have removed islander's reliance on community for social interaction and entertainment. But a willingness to take part in social activities also depends on the inclinations and dispositions of individual actors. For example, in the twenty-first century many social gatherings take place in the island bars and some people object to what they see as a prevalence of alcohol consumption (or pub culture) surrounding community events. While the overall reasons for lack of participation are unclear, Padraic sees the effect as an obvious problem facing islanders into the twenty-first century:

> If you're a population of 120 people or 130 people, you need everyone to be very active in it and to be amongst each other for it to be . . . to have vibrancy. I think there's an onus on you in an island community to be very much at the heart of it and involved in it, because otherwise without that you don't have community . . . It's important that everyone is contributing. I don't mean financially I mean contributing, be it in the Clare Island half-set, be it in the Comhaltas group, be it in the pastoral council, or the parish council, or be it in the GAA club, or be it in whatever . . . the national school or whatever, I think that's really important. That to have a community you need participation.

In Padraic's evaluation, a community is a vibrant social space defined through the contributions of its individual members. Music-making and participatory performance are important sites for social interaction and individual contribution. Ward, in his analysis of *céilidh* dancing and island community, notes the pragmatic value of social interaction and neighbourliness. Participation in music-making creates benefits across multiple arenas of community life and is more than entertainment or pastime:

> By engaging in joint enterprise with one's neighbour, a wider pool of knowledge and skill sets may be utilised, allowing a broader potential outcome of possibilities. But for such co-operation to be achievable one must know one's neighbours, and know that they are dedicated to joint enterprise. This is a functional asset of social gathering and recreation, a fluid, socialising form which helps individuals to continually navigate and embed themselves in a constantly changing world. (2015, 49)

Participation in music-making thus becomes both an engagement in the present and an assessment of future potential. Ward's analysis corresponds with Turino's description of participatory performance (2008) as a social bonding process.

Participants in community music-making

Individuals, such as Padraic, play an important role in motivating and promoting social activity on Clare Island. In a small community, the inclusion or absence of individual members can have a notable impact. Musicians are a smaller subcategory of the island community—not everyone is a musician—and so the activities of key musical participants are even more noticeable. The absence or presence of island performers can shape a night or a whole season of music-making within the community. However, there are more types of participants in island music-making than singers, instrumentalists and dancers.

In conversation, Clare Islanders distinguish between four main categories of individuals: locals, blow-ins, visitors and tourists. These categories are not exclusive, but each represents a different level of connection to the island and the community. There are several in-between categories such as seasonal workers, work volunteers (such as HelpX volunteers and au pairs) and others who live in a temporary fulltime resident status. The interactions (and variations) between types of local, types of blow-in, and types of visitor or tourist are detailed in several studies of small island and small rural communities (Burnett 1998; Cohen 1987; Kaul 2009; Kohn 1997; MacLeod and Payne 1994). These four categories reveal important social aspects of islandness and Clare Island music-making. The following discussion examines each category but with a caveat regarding subsequent use of the terms local and blow-in: In this ethnography, the term local refers to all the fulltime residents of the

community—regardless of whether the person is originally a blow-in or a local by birth. I will only use the term blow-in when such distinction enriches the ethnographic detail.

Gill (1994) in his discussion of in-group and out-group identity in island community life, outlines four different "publics" in the cognitive schema of islandness. The discussion of these four publics outlines similar participant categories of local, blow-in, visitor and tourist:

> The first 'island public' consists solely of those who, by their own definition, are 'from' the island (Public 1). Then there is an island public which includes those deemed 'not from' the island but who live on the island (Public 2). How, and who decides on the matter "who is from the island" is rarely empirical. It is more a "symbolic" term . . . A third public is formed when others connected to the island, say, relations and some summer guests are included (Public 3). It is worth noting that Public 2 includes Public 1, and both are included in Public 3. The fourth public is formed when anonymous 'visitors' are added to the other publics (Public 4). The visitors in Public 4 would include complete strangers, typically day-trippers or overnight guests . . . Sometimes the friends of those included in Public 3 are assigned to the public with whom islanders are completely unacquainted. (1994, 279)

Gill's assessment presents the interactions between the different publics (or participants) as increasing spheres of social interaction within the community. Although distinctions between Public 1 and Public 2 are less discernible in twenty-first century community life, this theoretical framework is still useful to apply in 2017.

Angus MacLeod and Geoff Payne's work discusses the categorisation of locals and incomers as a primary form of social division in rural Scotland. The small community area of Coigach is of similar population size to Clare Island and their descriptive framework (1994, 410) is worth reproducing here to illustrate degrees of categorisation:

Local:	Coigach-born and/or lived most of life in Coigach
Local non-resident:	local, living away from Coigach
Locally-connected:	non-local, married into local family, or with a long local work-record
Incomer:	non-local resident
Regular visitor:	incomer for part of each year (e.g. school holidays)

'White settler':	incomer, usually well-off/middle class, with few local connections; rarely used to describe people who come to live in Coigach, but is reserved for those who normally spend only a few weeks of the year in their holiday home
'Bongley'/visitor:	casual, non-local visitor or tourist

On Clare Island, "Locally connected" and "Incomer" are generally joined together and designated as blow-ins, and the "White settler" label is referred to with the in-between tourist designation of holiday-home owners. Kohn (1997) adds to these categorisations and details the subtle differences between incomer and tourist categories in a small-island setting. She also examines the progression through which tourists may pass (over time) through various stages of deepening connection to the island community (1997, 15). Kaul adds to the diachronic perspective of changing identity categories suggested by both MacLeod and Payne, and Kohn. He also presents a subtle reading of local identity in the Irish rural context (2009, 84–101). These three examples suggest that over time tourists can become blow-ins and blow-ins eventually can become categorised to some degree as local.

Drawing upon insider classifications, this research project categorises a local as an individual who has grown up on the island or spent the greater part of their life on the island. As noted above, the term local is more loosely applied within the ethnographic narrative. As Gill (1994) observed previously, this categorisation is more symbolic than empirically applied. This designation may be contested by some islanders who consider birth right and family history as the only true mark of island identity. Kaul records a similar perspective in Doolin, Co. Clare when an interviewee suggested that his five-hundred-year family history in the village was not quite enough to designate him as a "true local" (2009, 86). Defining my position as an insider ethnographer presents added context in the definition of "local". Applying Giazitzoglu and Payne's theoretical model (discussed in Chapter One), my position at the deepest level of insider ethnography arises from complete socialisation within the ethnographic field. A Clare Island local—such as this ethnographer—can "actively and creatively" (Giazitzoglu and Payne 2018, 1154) participate in community social life. As an insider ethnographer, I recognise locals as the people who understand the inner social dynamics of a music-making event. These are community members who have witnessed repeated iterations of the various texts and subtexts of music-making. To varying degrees of personal extent (based on age) locals have also experienced change and development in island music-making across time. Family history or birth right does not guarantee local status

and there are many island emigrants who, after years or decades of absence, have not experienced the changing contexts of island life since the 1980s. Although Clare Islanders by birth, and fitting in to MacLeod and Payne's category of "local non-resident", these individuals are—because of their disconnect from the community—incorporated to the island as visitors in Gill's "Public 3".

The history of the Irish islands includes a constant migration of people into island spaces. Gosling observes that this movement of people has been so consistent in the Irish context, that these disconnected off-shore islands maintain a shared history over thousands of years (2007, 30). These parallels reveal that in-migration to islands is both historically consistent and a dynamic element in island cultural life (Burholt, Scharf and Walsh 2013). For example, the 1841 population spike recorded on Clare Island was, in part, because of migrations from the mainland (Mac Cárthaigh 1999, 44).

These incomers are important contributors to island communities, and some have played an important role in promoting island life to the nation. Famous islanders such as Peig Sayers entered their island communities through marriage or other commitments; the Irish colloquial (and Clare Island) term for these newcomers is blow-in. Kaul gives considerable space to examining the distinctions between locals and blow-ins in the village of Doolin, Co Clare. Kaul categorises blow-ins as "people who were born elsewhere but now live permanently in the village. They cannot become 'local' in their lifetime, but their children are sometimes considered local" (2009, 85). The term blow-in holds some negative connotations implying a lack of commitment. American writer Kruger, a self-identified blow-in to Cape Clear Island, Co Cork observes the inferred notion that: "I've blown in from somewhere else like a seed on the wind, with the implication that I could, tomorrow, just as easily blow on to somewhere else" (1994, xi). Kaul notes that the term blow-in is part of a power relation in the distribution of symbolic capital associated with identity; on Clare Island this symbolic capital is that of islandness and islander identity. But as Gill (1994) suggested in his earlier description of island publics, it is not clear who arbitrates the shift in status from blow-in (outsider) to local (insider). One Clare Islander, born on the island in the 1940s to a second generation blow-in, described how in a dispute he was accused of being a blow-in (Field Notes, 14 March 2018). Considering this islander's lifelong connection to the community, the accusation bore little rational significance. However, the insult was serious enough to be remembered by this participant many decades after the fact. In his ethnographic work in Co. Clare, Peace observes that the designation of blow-in can become a means of soft discriminations or designations of who has access to community resources (2001, 60–62). At

a minimum—and in a pejorative sense—the label of blow-in denies access to the symbolic capital of island or local identity.

In recent decades, blow-ins have become more visible in the island community. Islanders are largely welcoming towards blow-ins and the community accommodates new additions. Olof Gill describes his experience of integration to the island community during the late 1980s and the minimal effect of blow-in status:

> Neither of my parents are from here but I grew up here, my strongest and most deep roots are to here, and in a lot of ways my identity in the broader world has been defined by my identity here. But also, I was very conscious growing up here of being a blow-in, or being different somehow . . . or of having a different background to the islanders . . . I think it could have been difficult for me growing up here, but [it wasn't] . . . partly because I made great friends at a very early stage in the school here . . . partly through excellent enlightened parenting . . . and partly from an underlying sense of fairness in the community . . . and an underlying decency in most people, who enjoyed having a new family in the community and all that came with that. So while there were a couple of times where I might have been upset as a kid to be called a blow-in, it never affected me in a meaningful way.

On Clare Island, blow-ins are an important addition to both island demographics and social activity. Olof is a prime example and remains an active member of island life through music, sport, and community forums. Blow-ins play an important role in sustaining community life and island vitality. Amongst small populations such as Clare Island they often add new ideas, enthusiasm and new blood. The distinction between local and blow-in becomes irrelevant in music-making and real-time community participation. In the Doolin example, the blow-ins are central to local music-making and Kaul suggests that they have "all but completely appropriated the traditional Irish music scene" (2009, 86). While it would not be accurate to say that blow-ins dominate island music-making—at least not directly—blow-ins have helped regenerate both island community and island music-making. In 2017, individuals such as Margaret O'Grady and Jörg Zengel are notable in their contributions (both will be introduced in more detail later).

As islanders-by-choice, blow-ins often have a self-conscious approach to island identity. In a 1989 *Irish Times* article entitled "Marrying in to an Island", Clare Island blow-ins Áine Ryan O'Malley and Beth Moran describe their deliberate efforts to integrate with their new island identity (Siggins 1989). In the thirty years since the piece was written, both women have made significant contributions to community life and the representation of island life to the outside world; these are just two examples. There is a history of in-migration for marriage, particularly of women (Gill 1994, 281), and many islanders have at least one

blow-in parent or grandparent. The community genealogy is constantly shifting and there is a corresponding change in dominant family names. Padraic observes that, as of September 2019, the O'Malley family name—once dominant on the island—is no longer represented in the primary school. Although he is an O'Malley, Padraic is unsentimental about such changes and feels that such familial or cultural lineages are not of central importance to island life:

> The O'Malley name, which has been so strong in the community for so long . . . when the last two O'Malley's in the school leave next June [2019], that will end the O'Malley name in the school. And that doesn't really matter as long as there's other names to take their place.

Royle conveys a similar attitude in his analysis of island life with the pragmatic assertion that a living future is better than attachment to ideals of "traditional purity" (2003, 26). Both Padraic and Royle observe that it is more important for island communities to be inhabited with participating members than idealised continuities.

Moving from the discussion of categories-of-locals to non-resident participants in music-making, Kaul outlines a distinction between tourists and a more involved form of holiday maker described as visitors. In Kaul's account visitors are different from tourists as: "they have personally come to know the community to a level that is far deeper than the standard first time or 'one off' tourist, and a certain number of the community have come to know them as well" (Kaul 2009, 80). This distinction holds true on Clare Island, and islanders frequently use the term visitor, albeit in a somewhat broader manner. On the island, the visitor category also includes members of the wider island diaspora who return to the island on an annual or more infrequent basis. However, from an insider perspective, visitor status depends less on blood relation than on a particular connection to, and understanding of, social activity on the island. Visitors may be familiar with the dynamics of island social life and have decades of experience of change and development on the island. Despite these connections, they do not live within the annual and seasonal cycle of the community. Ó Laoire (2003; 2005) describes many years of connection with the community on Tory through repeated visits and longstanding friendships. But as he readily observes, the islanders noted his lack of experience of the winter time as a friendly mark of dissimilarity (2005, 26). In the Clare Island context, this lack of year-round experience places him in the visitor category.

Tourists form the final category of individuals in island music-making. Tourists are holiday makers who travel to the island for short periods, ranging from a few hours (day-trippers) or up to a week for those who rent a holiday home. As a category, tourists

encompass a broad spectrum of individuals grouped together by their transitory connection to Clare Island. Gareth Shaw and Allan Williams (2004) suggest that tourism, as a practice, is difficult to define because of the multiple activities involved. In their estimation it is more useful to understand tourism as "a complex set, or bundle, of economic, political, socio-cultural and environmental processes related to tourist activities" (2004, 9). John Urry and Jonas Larsen (2011) emphasise that tourism is subject to historical and sociological variations. As such, definitions of tourist (as an identity category) changes over time. Instead of a definition, Urry and Larsen suggest a baseline description of tourism as a social practice and quality of modernity:

> Tourism is a leisure activity which presupposes its opposite, namely regulated and organised work. It is one manifestation of how work and leisure are organised as separate and regulated spheres of social practice in 'modern' societies. Indeed, acting as a tourist is one of the defining characteristics of being 'modern' and is bound up with major transformations in paid work. This has come to be organised within particular places and to occur for regularised periods of time. (2011, 4)

On Clare Island, tourists are typically individuals with little, or no, experience of the island or the community. These are the anonymous strangers entering island community through Gill's "Public 4" (1994, 279). Their experience and perceptions of Clare Island are from external third-party sources and the particular events occurring during their stay on the island. Typically, tourists only encounter a narrow segment of island life. For Urry and Larsen, tourist consumption is best understood through the concept of the *tourist gaze* which reimagines real spaces into a consumable form:

> The places gazed upon are for purposes not directly connected with paid work and they normally offer some distinctive contrasts with work . . . Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. (2011, 4)

According to this description, the tourist experience is intentionally disconnected from everyday life and the tourist consumes the island at the surface level of the gaze. However, this consumption works both ways and islanders engage with tourists as an addition to their social life. There is a host gaze that counters the tourist gaze and Kaul describes how Doolin locals observe tourists as a form of entertainment in the pub (2009, 78). Despite the surface level interactions implied by tourism, tourists add to island music-making both as participants and performers.

The categories of local, blow-in, visitor and tourist are ultimately relational groupings determined by interactions with, and connection to, the island environment. This segues to a

discussion of distinctive aspects of the island environment itself, namely the maritime setting and the temporal idiosyncrasies of island life. All participants in island music-making (locals, blow-ins, visitors and tourists) encounter the ferry journey and the wider influence of the sea on island life.

2. Sea travel, seasonality and the structures of island time

Seven kilometres west of Louisburgh on the southwestern corner of Clew Bay lies Roonagh pier, the main access point to both Clare Island and Inishturk. Sited on an exposed headland, facing open water and the distances of Atlantic swell, Roonagh is often inaccessible in the winter months. A newspaper article from the *Standard* in 1946 sums up islanders' opinion of Roonagh as being "a death trap, flattered by being called a harbour" (Crosby 2004, 237). While facilities have improved since 1946, Roonagh is still considered a dangerous and unpredictable site to land a boat. When it is not possible to land at Roonagh, the ferry sometime sails further in the bay to Old Head harbour or uses the sheltered pier at Cloughmore on Achill Island. Both these routes take more than twice as long as the Roonagh passage. Disembarking at Old Head or Achill is also inconvenient as most islanders park their cars in the Mayo County Council carpark located beside Roonagh harbour.

In fair weather, the boat journey from Clare Island to Roonagh takes around twenty minutes to cover the five kilometre stretch of water. From Roonagh, islanders can drive five minutes to the village of Louisburgh, or twenty minutes to the market town of Westport for grocery shopping. The regional centre of Castlebar, Co. Mayo is 45 kilometres from the harbour and offers a full range of shops and public services. (Since the late 1960s, most Clare Islanders were born here at the maternity unit of Mayo General Hospital.) For longer weekend outings islanders often travel ninety minutes south to Galway city or take a three-hour cross-country drive to Dublin.

Though there are other harbours from which one can sail to Clare Island, Roonagh is the main one. The crossing is both a symbolic transition, and an important dramatic device as Roonagh is the threshold, or *limen*, from which visitor and islander alike enter and exit the stages of both Clare Island and Ireland. From this place roles and identities are altered, allocated and played upon. American Ciara Cullen moved to Clare Island in the early 1980s and writes about the shift in her perspective as she became a fulltime islander:

If you go out to an island, you are moving out from your centre. You go out to it, but sometime, whether later that day, the next day or the next week you must turn your back

and head home. You are moving lineally. But there are those who go in to islands. For them the island is centre; the omphalos; it is the world. Once there, movement is circular: begin at any point and walk along its edge and you have no other option but to return to yourself. (Crosby 2004, 216)

From Roonagh visitors go "out" to the island while islanders go "in" to the island; a distinction that speaks of one's cosmological perspective as an islander or non-islander. Kruger notes a similar perspective amongst islanders on Cape Clear, Co. Cork (1994, 2). The Galway group The Saw Doctors allude to this distinction in the song "Clare Island" from their 1996 album *Same Oul' Town*: "Will you meet me on Clare Island? Summer stars are in the sky, We'll get the ferry out from Roonagh, and wave all our cares goodbye" (The Saw Doctors 1996). In the album liner notes they acknowledge the difference of perspective: "The natives of Clare Island say 'in' to the island and 'out' to the mainland, but the song feels right from a tourist point of view" (ibid).

For islanders, Roonagh is at once a mundane necessity and the defining feature of the daily connection to the outside world. The question of going "in" or "out" to the island is a matter of perspective (Ó Laoire 2005, 180) based on where one places the centre, as the journey across the water can lead one in or out depending on what your character role is. These conceptual metaphors (Lakoff 2003) continually shape islander and non-islander perspective. For visiting musicians—such as The Saw Doctors—Roonagh is both an entry point to Clare Island and a departure point from everyday (mainland) life.

"This little bit of water": the sea journey

John Gillis observes that islanders are less likely to romanticise maritime life and leave idealistic portrayals to "mainland landlubbers" (2014, 160). Nevertheless, the association with sea travel is one of the defining and enduring qualities of island life. It is from the waters of Roonagh that Quinn directed his camera inwards to Clare Island in the opening shot of his 1966 documentary. Similarly, in *Budawanny* (Quinn 1987) Roonagh and the ferry journey are an important introduction to the island. Blasket islander Ó Criomhthain describes boats as being an islander's "road through the sea" (2000 [1937] 164). In the twenty-first century, Clare Island babies make their first sea crossing at a few days old on their return from Mayo General Hospital. Even the islander whose livelihood is focused on terra firma must always be conscious of the boundaries imposed by the sea. As Cyril McCabe explained previously, Clare Island life in the past was dominated by the limitations of sea travel and "because of the fact that you could get cut-off . . . [by] this little bit of water".

The effect of weather on sea travel—especially inclement weather—has always been a central part of the island experience. Robert Flaherty's film *Man of Aran* (1934) depicts the Aran islanders in a constant struggle with the seas both as a provider and an oppressor. In "Sailing to an Island", Murphy captures the churning dangers of attempting to sail from Cleggan, Co. Galway to Clare Island: "There are hills of sea between us and land, between our hopes and the island harbour. A child vomits. The boat veers and bucks" (1963, 14–15). The Blasket Island authors describe situations identical to those experienced by Clare Islanders throughout the twentieth century. Ó Criomhthain repeatedly describes being at the mercy of the seas, and his matter-of-fact description of being stuck on the mainland following a wedding (2000 [1937], 82) reveals the normality of such inconveniences. In January 1954 several national newspapers reported the story of twenty Clare Islanders weather-bound on the mainland for ten days following a wedding ("Winds Keep 20 Islanders Nine Days Away from Home," *Irish Independent*, January 20, 1954; "Wedding Party Held Up by Storm," *Irish Examiner*, January 20, 1954). Another whimsical story from the *Mayo News* in 1973 reports the Irish defence forces involvement in airlifting the island priest back in time for a wedding ("Operation Helicopter for Clare Island Wedding," *Mayo News*, October 6, 1973). The effects of bad weather were regularly more than mere inconvenience to island life though, and often resulted in distress or tragedy. The drowning of five people while returning from a day on Clare Island in 1957 greatly affected the island community and sparked much debate at a national level, both in press and the houses of government (Ferriter 2018, 108–109). Another distressing event was reported in 1972 when rough seas, and inadequate landing facilities at Roonagh, disrupted the funeral of William O'Malley, an island emigrant killed on a work site incident in England ("Funeral Crossing to Clare Island had to be made from Achill," *Mayo News*, January 29, 1972).

In the twenty-first century these occurrences read as tales from a dark age in island life. The provision of bigger boats and harbours from the 1990s onwards means that extended days of being weather-bound are rare. In the 1980s it was still possible to be stuck on the mainland for several days, perhaps even weeks, but by the early 2000s delays rarely lasted more than a day. Despite many improvements, there remains an unpredictability to the scheduling. While it is no longer usual for islanders to be cut-off for long periods of time, it is expected in winter that the ferry schedule will be frequently disrupted through cancellations, timetable changes, or the use of alternative mainland harbours. In a survey of ferry sailings during January and February 2020, Clare Island Community Development Board recorded 72

disruptions from a total of 137 scheduled sailings.[7] This pattern of uncertainty is a constant feature of winter travel to and from the island.

The importance of sea travel in island life means that by default it has an important role to play in music-making on Clare Island. This was particularly so in the past when smaller boats and less frequent sailings restricted the passage of people (musicians) and goods (instruments). The limitations of passenger vessels (in terms of capacity and sea worthiness) influences tourism and visiting musicians. In 2017, visiting musicians required a reliable ferry service to transport equipment safely and return them at a scheduled time. Until the introduction of subsidised ferry services in the 1990s, overnight visits to Clare Island were difficult to plan due to less regular sailings. The smaller boats of this period were also easily disrupted by inclement weather and the older harbours were inaccessible at low tide. Pat Ewen first visited Clare Island in the mid 1960s and travelled to the island every year since. He recalls how prior to changes in the 1990s, the ferry service was erratic and the journey to the island demanded a level of patience:

> The quay at Roonagh was very small and basic and remained so for a long time. The service was very erratic in a way because it was totally weather dependent. I spent days camping on the mainland, waiting for a boat to get in here [to Clare Island] . . . that sort of thing. And no one knew [when the ferry was going] . . . telephoning was very difficult [at that time].

For most of the twentieth century boat travel was a constant source of discomfort and danger for both islanders and visitors to the island. Walsh describes the circumstances of ferry travel to the island in the 1950s and offers an anecdote underscoring the islanders' attitudes to the vagaries of the sea and adherence to schedules:

> Communications with the mainland are always uncertain, even in mid-summer, and this renders the island, to a great extent self-sufficient, especially during the winter months. The whole point about communication with the mainland is its uncertainty. The wind may change in a moment, and all plans must be cancelled, perhaps for weeks, because the journey to the mainland is too dangerous. The island attitude to this situation is summed up in the answer of the mail boat owner to the English tourist, who was informed, that the mail boat arrived at [Roonagh] at midday and was annoyed to be kept waiting for its arrival until 12.05 Outraged, he said to the boatman, "Do you realise you're five minutes late?" to which the boatman replied, laconically, "You're lucky, we were a fortnight late once". (Walsh 1958, 71)

Between 1968 and 1991, a purpose-built mail boat (The Dolphin) provided a larger deck space than the smaller boats operating up to this point. Nevertheless, it was a small

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[7] Figures supplied by the Clare Island Community Development Board, March 2020.

vessel by contemporary standards, with limited space for passengers and cargo. Former mail boat operator and island hotelier Chris O'Grady recalls how these small craft impacted his tourist business from the 1960s to the 1990s:

> I remember Easter, advertising at Easter . . . buying stock and everything like that, and the shagging weather use to heave up at Easter and we couldn't get near Roonagh with the boats we were using at the time, you know. We were using the half decker's . . . many a time I had to turn away all my Easter clients because I couldn't bring them in!

There was a constant discomfort and danger in sea travel, diffused through all decisions involving exchanges with the mainland. Chris describes how the necessities of island life required a constant battle with the environment and even fate itself:

> It was a nightmare, because you were constantly fighting the weather, and in those small open boats you know . . . people getting wet coming and going, luggage and everything like that. When I look back on it today, I realise how lucky we were, we hadn't an injury or a fatality of some sort through all the chances we took coming and going in those days, because we took some desperate chances.

In July 1991 the first modern steel ferry came into operation to meet the demands of a growing tourist industry. This twin engine vessel included indoor seating for passengers and was more comfortable than the small open craft. The move to bigger boats eased the major inconveniences of island life, particularly regarding regular connection and transportation of goods. However, there was also a subtle shift in the experience of travel to and from the island. Máirtín Moran cites the introduction of "bigger and better boats" as one of the major changes in island life during his lifetime because "you can come and go now without getting wet". In 2017, the inconveniences of the ferry crossing are less intrusive on passengers, but during bad weather there is still a significant level of discomfort.

Seasonality

In the twenty-first century, tourism is a driving force for music-making on the island. Seasonal tourism is, in turn, dependent on sea travel and influenced by seasonal changes of weather. Tourism patterns on Clare Island link to local tourism in Co. Mayo and patterns at a national level. According to the Irish national tourism authority (Fáilte Ireland), County Mayo was the seventh most popular destination for international tourists and the sixth most popular destination for domestic trips in 2017. The 324,000 overseas tourists and 503,000 domestic travellers generated €186 million euro for the Mayo economy (Fáilte Ireland 2017). In the

twenty-first century, modern tourism has a significant impact on the island economy, but also extends beyond direct financial gains. This is most evident in the distinct tourist season and off-season that marks community life and music-making in 2017. Ó Laoire notes a similar seasonality on Tory island, with "the tendency for the island to be a much livelier place" in the summer than in the winter (2005, 13). He suggests that this is a seasonal reversal of the traditional timeframe of island life in the past, for "when the economy was based on farming and fishing, and the population was more stable, winter was the main rest period when lively socialising took place" (ibid). This seasonal reversal is noted on other Irish (Kruger 1994; Royle 2008) and Scottish islands (Kohn 1997, 16) where tourism is an important strand in the local economy.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, summers on Clare Island are busier than any previous period in living memory: there are more tourists, more accommodation providers, more services, more passenger ferries, more scheduled events, and more musicians travelling to the island. Since the 1960s, music-making and social life on Clare Island has become increasingly shaped by the economic activities of tourism (detailed in Chapter Four). Although this seasonal pattern existed for some time, the explosion of tourist focused entertainment during the twenty-first century has impacted the balance of year-round community based social life. Padraic O'Malley acknowledges the increased level of summer activity in recent years and the positive effect on island social life and music-making:

> The summers are really, really busy here . . . It's because there's lots of different types of music . . . like in July and August guaranteed four nights' music every single week, maybe even seven nights a week sometimes, but guaranteed four nights . . . So there's a lot happening and a lot of quality stuff happening . . . be it the singer-songwriter nights, or be it the Comhaltas nights or the Féile Ceoil, or even the visiting bands that play on the weekend.

However, Padraic also laments the seasonal imbalance that has come to characterise island life in 2017 and regrets that performance events are less spread out over the year. He accepts that there is an economic basis for much of these events:

> We probably should be doing a little bit more in the winter time, because in some ways it's all go, go, go for the summer . . . we're kind of going from one thing to the next because it's a busy time . . . Whereas, we probably have more time [in winter] to enjoy a night. But all these things have to make economic sense as well.

Padraic's perception of summer being "really, really busy" is linked to his own personal commitment to participating in island life and community events. As emphasised earlier,

there are a cohort of islanders who try to participate in social events and music-making whenever possible. Islanders who choose not to engage with community events or summer music-making can—apart from the minor inconvenience of negotiating tourists boarding the ferry or walking on the roads—avoid much of the bustle.

Even without tourism the summer is a busy period for numerous tasks and pastimes that are put on hold during the winter months. At a latitude of approximately 53.8 degrees north, and its open sky location, Clare Island can experience up to seventeen hours of daylight around the summer solstice. This means that outdoor work and leisure activities can continue, under favourable weather conditions, up until ten or eleven o'clock at night.

Timetables of modern island life

Islands are often characterised by mainlanders—or those who live by urban time schedules—as having their own temporal organisation or "island time" (Hodson & Vannini 2007). Sometimes this appears in the scheduling (or modifying) of music-making events to local habits rather than mainland standards (Miller 2007, 22). With a diverse workforce based on traditional and modern work practices, there are very few adult Clare Island residents who live by a Monday to Friday, nine-to-five schedule. The sheep farmers, fishermen, self-employed, and fish farm operators who form the bulk of Clare Island workforce have schedules that bear no resemblance to the popular image of a workweek. Those involved in the tourism sector work intensely during the tourist season and in the off-season either engage in other employment or prepare for the next year. Other professions, such as those tied to mainland networks (civil servants, or builders relying on mainland suppliers) tend to follow the weekday/weekend time division. The various schedules demanded by agriculture, fishing, building, tourism and civil work result in an overlap of work patterns and time. This is perhaps a defining feature of labour and employment in a small island setting and Kohn describes the "occupational pluralism" that marks islander's attempts to earn a living within the changing opportunities of a seasonal economy (1997, 15).

Despite these different seasonal and weekly timeframes, the weekday/weekend dichotomy is central to island social activity and music-making; most music-making events take place between Friday and Sunday. Throughout the twentieth-century, Catholic religious observances maintained special significance to the structure of the week, and Sunday was an obligatory day of rest and an important day of socialisation. Throughout the year, Sunday was a day for meeting neighbours, going to the pub, or (during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s) attending the Sunday night dances held in the parish hall (Walsh 1958, 323–339).

In 2017, the longest established, consistent, and socially significant timetable within island life is offered through the primary school calendar. But the timeframe of the school year is only a daily experience for teachers, parents, and children. The timeframe and schedules of secondary education have a greater social impact on the island. As there is no secondary school on Clare Island, children (in the twelve to eighteen age group) must attend mainland schools. By 2017 most islanders attend secondary school in the nearby mainland town of Louisburgh. The current ferry service means students can—weather permitting—leave at 8am on Monday morning and return to the island on Friday evening. Those without family on the mainland stay in boarding houses for four nights. In effect, there is a weekly depopulation of the island to secondary school during the academic year. As Padraic described earlier in this chapter, the corresponding repopulation at the weekends and holiday periods adds a layer of "life" to the island, and islanders comment on the island being "quiet" when the children go back to school. The migration of young islanders to third level adds to this ebb-and-flow of island population but to a lesser degree as third level students return to the island more infrequently. Máirtín Moran (born in 1947) observes how the current practice of mainland schooling offers positive benefits for individuals but has some negative outcomes for community life:

> It's good for the kids and it's good for them to have all the opportunities but . . . it doesn't help the community. They're gone from a younger age, like they're gone at 12 and they're only back at weekends and during the holidays . . . when I was a kid there was nobody really going to, or not many, going to secondary school.

Prior to the 1970s, fewer island children attended second level education and multiple factors influenced each individual to attend or forego further education. Some children attended boarding schools in Tuam, Co. Galway or elsewhere. Máirtín recalls a more vibrant young population in the days before compulsory second level attendance:

> And like everybody would be around until they'd be 18 or 19 or 20 and then they'd be going off to England or they'd be going somewhere. But they'd be around most of the time so there was more young people so you could have a bit of a game of football every Sunday and there'd be enough to make two little teams. And that could be every Sunday if you wanted to, winter and summer.

For those islanders destined to spend their adulthood on the island, the classroom was no substitute for the practical homebased apprenticeship of farming and fishing. The practical issues of physical access to the mainland and the added expense of boarding-house

accommodation further dis-incentivised academic learning. Máirtín comments also highlight the bleak prospects of the period though, when emigration was more common than education.

Having described the island experience in terms of sea travel, seasonality and temporal organisation, the examination will now turn to the locations (the where) of music-making on Clare Island. This provides both an outline of the potential performance spaces within the community and the dominant sites of music-making in 2017.

3. Performance Spaces

Martin Dowling (2010) describes how Irish rural life witnessed a shift from outdoor to indoor music-making in the nineteenth century post-famine period. During the twentieth century private homes and public houses played a central role in the development of Irish music and social habits. Clare Island's cultural history followed a similar pattern, however on a small island the unpredictable maritime climate adds a practical necessity in the use of indoor spaces. Music-making on Clare Island is primarily an indoor activity and tied to specific buildings, rooms and conventions of the built environment. While sometimes during warm weather musicians perform in outside spaces attached to the island bars, it is much rarer for public music-making events to take place in separate outdoor spaces. For example, musicians perform occasionally on the beach (or the pier) as part of the annual regatta day. Therefore, an overview of the built infrastructure is essential for understanding the spaces of music-making and of community.

During the 2017 fieldwork period, I conducted a survey of the primary sites in Clare Island community life. This was an illustrative survey as exact building figures can change on a yearly basis. I calculated a total of 118 structures with habitation or social uses (this count excludes all sheds and other industrial or agricultural units). Some fifty-four of these 118 buildings are domestic residences with a year-round occupancy. These houses and their occupants formed the core of the island community in 2017. A further ten buildings can be classed as part-time residences where the owner/occupier spends a considerable portion of their time away from the island; an example of this category are houses owned by island fishermen employed in deep-sea trawling. This ten building count also includes households comprising individuals who divide their time between work, or other commitments, on the mainland and the island. These people are often active members of the community and it would be inaccurate to describe their dwellings as holiday-homes.

There are a further twenty-seven houses that can be properly described as holiday homes. The commonality being that the owners have little connection to community life outside of their holiday periods, and do not participate in the functioning of the community through voluntary boards, business or organisational activity. These twenty-seven houses range from buildings that are rarely used (some having no occupier during 2017) to others that are occupied periodically. Some of these holiday homes are owned by members of the island diaspora and some by people with no community affiliations.

Out of the overall 118 count, twelve buildings can be categorised as unused or abandoned properties. In these examples, the owner-occupier is deceased or otherwise absent from the island and community life for several years. Such buildings are often in varying states of disrepair but maintain a potential to function within community infrastructure. An example of this regenerative potential occurred in 2018 when a cottage—unused for a decade or longer—reopened as a small art studio. The remaining fifteen buildings from the 118 count are non-residential but include important community structures such as the church, school, shop and crèche building. Some of these (the presbytery, lighthouse, the Sailor's bar, and medical clinic) include accommodation, but in 2017 it would be inaccurate to describe them as residential spaces. As a whole, these fifteen buildings form the backbone of tourism, commerce, State support and religious life on the island.

In some examples from this survey it is easy to make clear-cut distinctions; there can be little dispute regarding fulltime residencies and non-residential buildings. However, there are regular overlaps between building functions because of seasonal dynamics and changing circumstances within the community. For example, six of the private, fulltime residencies operate bed-and-breakfast businesses during the summer months. In other years, various holiday-homes acted as long-term rental properties for fulltime island residents. Overall, these 2017 figures reveal that the community of Clare Island operates within a small built infrastructure. Along with the physical environment of the island, these sites provide the figurative and literal stages for community social activity. Within this infrastructure there are four key sites for music-making which can be identified on the island: The Sailor's Bar; the public bar in the Community Centre building; St. Patrick's National School; and, the Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

My fieldwork in 2017 focused on music-making in community spaces: this was largely due to the absence of community focused activity in private houses. This approach complements other research of music-making in a public space or community context (Finnegan 2007 [1989]; Kaul 2009; Ní Fhuartháin 2019; Ward 2015) although other scholars

integrate public and private spaces (Ó Laoire 2005). Music research focusing primarily on domestic spaces is less common; Glassie (1982; 2006) and Barry Taylor (2013) are notable examples. During 2017, I did not attend any domestic music events outside of my own residence; such events occurred, but were private gatherings. In the twenty-first century, community gatherings in private houses are often for formal occasions, typified by the mourning rituals of an Irish wake (Danaher 1964). The one noteworthy (non-musical) social gathering I attended at a private household in 2017 was for a fiftieth birthday party. This occurred by default following a funeral on the island and in other circumstances would have taken place in the Community Centre bar. In 2017, and over the last number of years, house parties or music-sessions in private households are an infrequent occurrence. This absence is significant as island homes—or the private house as a space for music-making— were central within the historical context of island social life during the twentieth century. House dances, as part of both religious and secular activities, formed an important part of community life until the 1980s. Although there is evidence of a licenced tavern on Clare Island in the late nineteenth-century, it was not until the late twentieth-century that the public house began to assume many of the roles of the private dwelling in community life. I will continue this discussion in Chapter Three.

The public bars

The most active spaces for music-making on Clare Island in 2017, and throughout the start of the twenty-first century, are the two public bars near the harbour. Since 2012, both the bar at the Clare Island Community Centre and the Sailor's Bar have operated as fully licenced public houses. These two businesses provide open-to-all, free musical-entertainment during the summer and on other off-season occasions. The Community Centre bar operated as a community operated members-only club bar from 1999 until the purchase of a seven-day publican's licence in 2011 by the Clare Island Community Centre management committee. The Sailor's Bar is privately owned and was originally the site of the Bay View Hotel until its renovation and rebranding in 2012.

Despite objections from some islanders concerned with the focus on alcohol, the bars have become a central space in community life. Such concerns arise in both private discourse and occasionally at public dialogue. In 2013, a community consultation undertaken by Mayo County Council and Mayo Community Futures published a *Clare Island Community Action Plan 2014–2019* (Wrafter 2013) which, amongst other things, outlined a community desire to regulate bar opening times. The survey quotes one anonymous islander who condemns

the "over emphasis on drinking by default as the location of many events is in the bar" (Wrafter 2013, 14). The public house stands as a contentious space in Irish society, but is a key location for social activity and music-making. The details of this history and associated tensions are well documented in research on Irish cultural history, sociology and music-making (O'Connor 2001; Ó hAllmhuráin 2003; Kneafsey 2002; Martin 2016; O'Shea 2008; Scarbrough 2008; Share 2003). Clare Island trends are similar to those of other rural areas and the centrality of the pub in rural community life is noted in ethnographic research by Body (1973) and Peace (2001). The Community Centre bar and the Sailor's Bar are focal points for Chapters Three and Four, respectively.

Church

The other communally inclusive space for music-making is the congregational setting of the island's Roman Catholic Church. Islanders are predominantly Catholic, but the importance of the church has diminished significantly in island life since the 1980s. This social change is comparable to the secularisation of Irish society as a whole (Tovey and Share 2003). Louise Fuller (2004) provides an account of the decline of Catholicism in Irish life, while Brown (2004, 364–73) and Ferriter (2005, 735–39) discuss the upheavals experienced by the Catholic Church in the 1980s and 1990s. While the island experience mirrors that of Irish society, the decline of the Church had additional social impact for the Clare Island community. Since 2002, the combined parish of Clare Island and Inishturk is without a resident priest. Since then most of the day-to-day running of church services on Clare Island are by the local parish council. This group organise prayer services and coordinate any choral or musical activity for church events. On two out of every three consecutive weekends, priests from the Westport parish travel to Clare Island to celebrate Mass on the Friday evening and Saturday morning.

The absence of a resident cleric marked a major change on Clare Island as the priest was a consistent member of the community since at least 1850 (Crosby 2004, 80). For small islands, such as Clare Island, the local priest was the sole representative of Church (and by default State) authority within the community. In his modern history of the Irish islands, Ferriter notes the centrality of the priest in twentieth century island life and their role in voicing island issues at a national level (2018, 142–190). Alongside having a central role in religious life, local politics and community development, the priest was often a contributor to social activity and entertainment. Over the decades, various Clare Island priests actively supported football tournaments (Fr James Heaney 1951–57), staging dramatic productions

(Fr Pat O'Brien 1979–83), and music-making (Fr Peter Gannon 1990–94). These are just three examples from a long list.

The absence of a community priest had some positive results for community participation and music-making. In 2017, an enthusiastic group of self-directed singers and musicians performed regularly at church services and other religious occasions. A Clare Island church choir existed for many decades and in 1939 the *Tuam Herald* notes the participation of a Clare Island choir at the second annual Liturgical Festival of the Archdiocese of Tuam ("Eighty Choirs at Liturgical Festival," *Tuam Herald*, April 29, 1939). However, until 2002 the choir—and other liturgical music—was subject to the musical dispositions of the particular curate in residence. In the twenty-first century, the involvement of the lay community in running church services resulted in a more consistent attitude towards instrumental music and choral singing. The choir is a casual grouping of between five to ten (predominantly female) singers. Most members have no formal musical training and they sing hymns from memory; often with one or two confident singers setting the tempo and register of the music. The choir performs mainly at larger religious events (funerals, confirmations, communions, weddings) and at holiday celebrations (Christmas, Easter, St. Patrick's Day). Alongside the choir is a small Gospel styled group called The Saints and Sinners. This is essentially a vocal ensemble (usually three or four singers) with additional electric piano accompaniment by Jörg Zengel. Jörg—a former professional jazz musician and retired Lutheran pastor—established the group in 2013 after moving full time to Clare Island. Since 2013, he has become a consistent participant in island music-making. Along with playing music in the church, Jörg provides piano accompaniment for performers at the National School Christmas concert (outlined in next section), offers piano lessons to several young islanders, and performs occasionally at other public events.

Although the church is officially Roman Catholic, there is an open attitude towards religious denomination as demonstrated by the active role taken by Lutheran Jörg and other non-Catholic members of the island community. Though the music in church is congregational and in principle open to those gathered, there is a distinction between those performing and the rest of the gathering. Typically, there is little or no musical participation from non-group members.

School

School buildings have played a broad role in community life and music-making on the Irish islands. For example, the schoolhouse on Tory Island, Co Donegal (Ó Laoire 2005, 132) and

Inishbofin, Co. Galway (Concannon 1993, 86, 97) were used during special occasions to accommodate larger community gatherings. Through its curriculum and its communal outreaches, St. Patrick's National School is another important site for music-making on Clare Island. The school is a different order of communal space though to the public bars and the Catholic Church. The school is not inclusive or fully open to the community, in that one must be a pupil to attend and a parent of a child to participate in many school matters. Despite these boundaries, the national school is a central part of the community and the children (in their role as pupils) are often significant members in communal activity and music-making. For the September 2017 to June 2018 school year, there were 23 children enrolled in the primary school.

Since 1983, St. Patrick's National School has undergone dramatic changes, developing from a small one-roomed building, with one teacher and no electricity, to a multi-roomed structure with two fulltime teachers, a learning support teacher, an office administrator, and a part-time music teacher. Music-making in the school has developed alongside developments in the Irish primary school syllabus; most notably the introduction of a Music curriculum in 1999 (Department of Education and Science 1999). Since 2004/05, most children have received musical instruction from Mary Finn (a traditional musician and music teacher from Co. Sligo) and formal music instruction at the school is primarily in Irish traditional instruments. These lessons owe much to Mary's availability, but also to parent and teacher support for music education. Support for the school's music programme is also strong within the wider community and is evident in the regular donations from the island Comhaltas branch. These donations help to fund lessons and purchase musical instruments (the Comhaltas branch is further discussed in Chapter Three.)

The most significant community event involving the primary school pupils and the wider island community is the school's annual Christmas concert. This variety concert, taking place in December at the end of the school term, is an institution in the community calendar and centres around music-making and drama. As an educational psychologist and Clare Island resident, Gill (2017) argues that island schools are strong markers of community resilience and sustainability. He suggests that Clare Island's "capacity for resilience" (2017, 34) can be measured by school performance, both in terms of educational attainments and the role of the school in community life. By Gill's analysis the school concert, along with a healthy population of young islanders, is an important mechanism in community life and a display of island resilience into the future. He describes the 2015 Christmas concert and notes the community enthusiasm for the event:

The event takes place in the dark of the winter, a time when raging seas and violent storms are frequent visitors. No single event that takes place on the island throughout the year receives such support and draws such an attendance at the Christmas Concert. The event is more than a concert, short plays and sketches are performed. Pupils recite, dance and sing. It is not unheard of for the amusements, with tea-break and pauses to extend over three and a half hours. The reader must not interpret this description of the event as neighbours turning out as a curtesy or duty. Every living inhabitant usually attends (including babies). Friends and family make a special journey from the mainland, because the entertainment is so good. One reason for this is because the audience will expect the teachers and pupils to be brazen and pertinent. Vignettes are enacted to record recent events, often both national and international and, of course, to reflect notable events on the island. (2017, 41)

These school concerts are an annual event since 1975 and have become a rite of passage for all island school children. Most islanders, under 55 years, have performed on stage in front of the whole community as part of these concerts. As singing, dancing and instrumental performance are a central part of the concerts, islanders in this age category have experienced music-making at some level. Former school principal Mary McCabe recalls the beginnings of this annual event and notes the motives and positive effects of performances:

I think the first . . . Yes, the first Christmas I was here [1975] the children were quite bashful and they needed to be brought out of themselves . . . they were shy and not used to performing. So we organised a play, and variety concert where there was singing, and we even introduced dancing so we had them dancing. I started teaching them the tin whistle; my limited knowledge of music I tried to pass on to them. From then on every single year there would be a children's school concert . . . which was very good for the kids because they became a lot more confident and outgoing . . . in many ways it was the highlight of the year for a lot of people.

Since 1975, the school concert has integrated other music-making activities taking place in the community (instrumental lessons, set-dancing lessons) and provided a public outlet for these newly acquired skills. Overall, these concerts feed into a community interest in performance, one complemented by the adult drama group productions. These are also an annual part of community wintertime activities and popular addition to island life since at least the 1950s.

The previous three sections have answered some of the basic questions proposed by Seeger (1979) in the chapter introduction. The discussion of the "what", "where", "how", "when", "by whom", "to whom" and "why" of Clare Island music-making are entwined in a general discussion of island spaces, environment and community life. Nevertheless, the following section addresses these questions in a more direct manner and describes the specifics of Clare Island performances and music-making in 2017. This section will also

situate the discussions from the previous sections within the fieldwork period of this ethnographic research project.

4. Music-Making in 2017

The following section outlines music-making and community events during a typical year on Clare Island in the twenty-first century. The section begins with a review of the annual round of community events and highlights the key periods of music-making. Many of the key dates in the island social calendar coincide with national holidays and other occasions in Irish cultural life. Following this calendar outline, I will present a detailed analysis of music-making on Clare Island during the summer tourist season of 2017. This survey reveals the summer months as the busiest period for music-making on the island and provide a background for further discussions in Chapters Three and Four.

Annual cycles of music and social life

The calendar year on Clare Island begins, and ends, with the Christmas and New Year's celebrations. The quieter months of October, November, January and February sit either side of this period of social activity. Christmas is an important holiday as it is usually the only time of year that groups of islanders living away are likely to meet each other. It is also the only period where islanders and the visiting diaspora are solely within their own company. As detailed earlier, the primary school Christmas concert is an important event and marks the beginning of Christmas celebrations. In recent years the senior citizen's Christmas dinner party (occurring earlier in the month) has also become associated with the start of music-making and socialising in the holiday period. In 2017—and for several years before—several younger islanders re-established the rural tradition of the Wren Day celebrations (St Stephen's Day, 26 December). It is customary for islanders to socialise on the traditional community nights of St Stephen's Day, New Year's Eve, and Little Christmas (6 January). These are often nights with organised music sessions in the Community Centre bar. (During the period of this research project the Sailor's Bar remained closed during the winter months.)

From Christmas to St Patrick's Day on 17 March there is usually little community social activity or music-making. St Patrick's Day adds some excitement following the preceding ten weeks of inclement weather and social downtime. The Clare Island St Patrick's Day parade (established in the mid-1990s) comprises an assortment of homemade floats

pulled by tractors, jeeps and other assorted vehicles. The floats are usually created by family groups and there is a carnival atmosphere surrounding the event. Following the parade there is usually a traditional Irish music session, or some other performance, in the Community Centre bar.

The Easter holidays mark the end of the wintertime and most of the tourist accommodation providers open for business. During this holiday period, tourists travel to the island and there is usually music-making in both the bars. The first Monday in May is a national holiday, and this May bank holiday weekend marks the start of summer. From this point until the end of September, the island tourist season begins. In this period, there is an increase in ferry sailings, bar opening hours are extended, and restaurant services begin. Until 1994, islanders considered the June bank holiday (Whit) weekend the first weekend of summer. The creation of the May bank holiday widened the timeframe, but June 'Whit' weekend is still an important juncture in the season and this is usually the first busy tourist weekend on the island. The weekend includes music-making and an annual round-the-island yacht race. The remainder of June includes various social events and visiting musical groups. The highlight of the month being the mid-summer celebrations taking place on (or around) the 23 June as part of the tradition of St. John's night. This celebration connects to older traditions within the island and throughout rural Ireland (Danaher 1972, 138; O'Farrell 2004, 44). The revelries in 2017 included music in both bars, various bonfires around the island, and a beach party lasting into the early hours of morning.

The tourist high-season begins in July and continues until the end of August. During these two months, there is a continuous cycle of events, visitors, tourists, and nights of music. In 2017, regular music sessions (Tuesday and Thursday) filled out the mid-week, while every Friday and Saturday night different music groups played in the Sailor's Bar and the Community Centre bar. The first Monday of August is a public holiday, and in the past this August bank holiday weekend was often the busiest of the summer. In recent years there is a general increase in activities throughout July and August. In 2017, there were several festival days and weekends including the Féile Ceoil weekend (July), the Clare Island Regatta (July), the Bard Summer School (July), the Clare Island Food Festival (August), and the Clare Island Film Festival (September). Most of these festivals include music-making as a central component or as an added attraction. By the start of September there is a decrease in visitor numbers to the island, and by the end of the month the community returns to off-season patterns. The weekly schedules of summer music-making end, restaurant and accommodation services close, and the ferry returns to its limited wintertime service.

In any year, there are often other occasions for socialising and music-making interspersed into this more predictable pattern. Celebrations of life cycle moments such as births, marriages and deaths are all occasions where islanders join as a community. Not all these events involve music-making but many do in some form or other; be it live or recorded, casual or organised.

Survey of music-making 2017

The following survey of music-making in 2017 focuses on events taking place in the Community Centre bar and the Sailor's Bar. There are many ways to divide up the annual cycle on Clare Island, but for this survey it is most useful to think in terms of two periods; a busy tourist season running from May to September and a quiet off-season from October to April. These periods are distinct: during the off-season the ferry makes two return sailings per day (weather permitting) compared to five or more return sailings in the tourist season. This increased connectivity is paired with an increase in activity and employment on the island. Some twenty jobs materialise every summer and includes bar staff, restaurant staff and cleaners. This has a positive impact on the population as seasonal migrants fill some of these roles. While not all seasonal changes revolve around tourism, the increased seasonal amenities benefit locals and tourists alike. The entertainment and dining opportunities available in the high season add a layer of depth to local life absent in the off-season. Over the winter, the bar only opens on particular days, most of the tourist accommodation closes, and no restaurant services are available. It is necessary to further define the tourist season into shoulder periods (May and September) and a high-season (June to August). In years when Easter occurs towards the end of April, this month also becomes part of the shoulder period. The three-month period from June to August is the tourist high-season, but the six to seven weeks from 1 July are consistently the busiest for tourist accommodation providers. Throughout this period the island receives a steady flow of day-trippers, but numbers are typically no more than 150 per day.

This survey of music-making focuses precisely on the period from Friday, 2 June to Sunday, 3 September 2017. These dates cover the thirteen weeks, and fourteen weekends, that make up the high-season on Clare Island. I included the September dates as islanders regard this weekend as the end of the high-season. Most of the regular summer events come to an end by this weekend. The twelve months of 2017 characterised the previous five-year period, and many of the events in this year were repetitions of previous years. In 2017, there were approximately eighty-six public events that included music as their focus or as a supporting

aspect. The majority of these events took place between May and September in one of the two island bars. From 1 June to 3 September, there were fifty-eight music events advertised on social media platforms and in the local *Clare Island Newsletter* (two events were cancelled). Of this number, twenty-nine events took place in the Community Centre bar, and twenty-seven in the Sailor's Bar; several of these happened concurrently. This booking schedule is representative of the pattern of summer music-making on Clare Island from Summer 2012—following the opening of the Sailor's Bar—until 2019. This high-season period contained the majority of music-making on Clare Island in these calendar years. The performance details of these music-making events provide further insight into the characteristics of island music-making.

Between 1 June and 3 September, some thirty-seven different musical groups performed at these fifty-six separate performance events. This included nine solo acts, eighteen duos (not including the two cancellations), eleven trios, eleven quartets, and seven groups of five or more. Most of the groups played once during this season with seven performing on two occasions and a further three playing on three separate dates. Many of these musicians and groups were repeat visitors, with circa 90% of them (thirty-three groups) returning from 2016. The majority of the bookings were with musicians based in the Mayo and Galway region, but the summer line-up also included one or more groups from counties Derry, Kildare, Monaghan, Offaly, and Westmeath.

Of these fifty-six music events, twenty were Irish traditional music and thirty-six were of popular music genres. Some twenty-eight of the thirty-six popular music groups featured acoustic instruments such as guitar, mandolin, banjo, fiddle. A further nine included a drum kit or rock-ensemble setup (electric guitars, keyboards) as their primary sound signature. Approximately eight of the thirty-six popular music gigs were by groups that included Irish traditional music as a minor part of their performances. For example, the group Flat Out, from Ballina, Co. Mayo who advertise themselves as a "lively acoustic cover band with Irish instruments available for a variety of pub gigs, private parties, wedding ceremonies, drinks receptions and wedding receptions".[8] The group play rock and pop songs, but also perform traditional music using amplified accordion, fiddle, guitar, harp and four-part vocal harmony.

As noted earlier, the island's small population combined with seasonal change means that exact figures and statistics for island groupings may be skewed in any attempt at one

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[8] Flat Out, "Services," n.d. Facebook, accessed April 3, 2019.
https://www.facebook.com/pg/FlatOutMusicGroup/services.

hundred percent accuracy. Percentages are useful in analysis, but the islander perspective accounts for many subtle changes that can easily shift the figures by several digits. What follows is for illustrative purposes and gives an approximate picture of island music-making and life during the fieldwork period. The base population for these measurements comes from the 2016 census figures of 159 resident islanders. However, in the period after the 2016 census collation there were three deaths amongst the resident populations and an additional death in 2017. There were zero births in the community in this period. Alongside these changes, two families—each comprising two adults and two young children—moved off the island in the winter of 2017/2018 and took up fulltime residence on the nearby mainland. It is more difficult to account for the fluctuations in population resulting from seasonal residence by islanders and other such factors. For example, younger islanders who have just completed second or third level education will sometimes spend a winter on the island before pursuing employment on the mainland.

In 2017, approximately forty-three islanders (between 26% to 28% of the population) can be categorised as regular performers. This is a generous figure and incorporates all individuals observed performing in 2017. The aim of this categorisation, is to account for islanders who actively participate in music-making events rather than form aesthetic judgments of contributions. It is entirely possible for an individual to be musically adept and have little or no participation in music-making in the community. For example, during his visit to Clare Island in 1973, Munnelly describes meeting an islander with an extensive repertoire of songs who was otherwise unknown as a performer in the community (2001, 194). As such, this 2017 figure includes all adult instrumentalists, dancers, and oral performers (song and recitation) who participated in music-making. This figure also includes younger islanders who performed regularly at island events but does not account for the obligatory performances by the school children as part of the annual Christmas concert. Of these forty-three islanders, approximately twenty-nine are regular performers who participated in public music-making three times or more during the year. This selection of players, singers, and dancers forms a go-to list of island performers for events such as the weekly Comhaltas Seisiún in July and August. Of these forty-three islanders, approximately thirteen play a musical instrument and many are multi-instrumentalists. The main instruments played by islanders are accordion, banjo, fiddle, guitar, harmonica, and piano. Accordion, fiddle and harmonica playing have the longest history on the island and were the core components of traditional music performance in the past. Banjo and guitar are a popular addition in recent decades, while piano performance owes much to the lessons of Jörg Zengel

since 2013. Amongst these core instruments, guitar is the most widely used in the different genres performed on the island.

In concluding this survey, it is important to highlight that in the ninety-two days of high season from June to September, I attended thirty-nine different music events over thirty-six nights with a total of forty-four nights of social outings on Clare Island. None of the events started earlier than 10pm and many continued till 1am or later. On fourteen of these nights, I was directly involved in the music-making through technical assistance, various support roles, or as a performer in open sessions. The primary aim of attending these events was to facilitate ethnographic participant/observation (Madden 2010, 97). However, it is useful to note that this relatively high level of attendance is not unusual for an islander during the high-season. As described earlier in this chapter, there are a cohort of islanders who participate in as many events as possible. This is further compounded by a steady influx of holidaying relatives and friends who initiate further social gatherings. At music-making events, it is usual to see islanders accompanied by visiting friends, siblings, cousins, or distant relatives.

Conclusion

Chapter Two describes the circumstances of music-making and community life on Clare Island in the twenty-first century. This examination of the who, where, what and when of Clare Island music-making uncovers similarities with other islands and small communities throughout Ireland. The description of Clare Island performance conventions, genres and social settings find a parallel in accounts of music-making in North Mayo (Kneafsey 2002), Co. Clare (Kaul 2009), and Tory island (Ó Laoire 2005). Aspects of community life and music-making on Clare Island are comparable to examples from Scotland (Burnett 2011; Kohn 1997; Ward 2015) and connect to wider themes of music-making and islandness around the globe (Baldacchino 2011; Dawe 2004). However, the particulars of island life and music-making on Clare Island distinguishes it from other locations.

Through an examination of people, spaces, schedules, and events in 2017, Chapter Two uncovers three dominant settings, or frameworks, in Clare Islanders experience of music-making and islandness. The sea is the most conspicuous and defining framework; it creates the characteristic aspects of isolation in an island environment. Furthermore, marine transport dominates all physical interactions between islanders and the outside world. This sea journey is in turn shaped by the cycles of seasonal weather patterns. Together, sea and season have an ever present role in islandness and music-making on Clare Island. The built environment

imposes a second framework on island music-making and community interactions. At a fundamental level, the island landscape—with its limited space for construction—shapes the built environment. However, buildings also reflect the population size and the economic resources available within the community. As venues for music-making, Clare Island's buildings represent the interactions between physical environment (the island) and the social body of the community (the islanders). The possibilities for music-making and communal interaction on Clare Island are shaped by the social function of buildings, their associated economic practices, and the size of the performance area. A third framework in the experience of music-making and islandness is the human population and the people who participate in community life. Both seasonal change and the built environment effect this population. But in the twenty-first century, the local community also includes participants from outside of the island. The music-making community of Clare Island includes long-term (locals) and short-term (visitors and tourists) members. The combination of Clare Island's population, buildings and maritime setting imposes a distinct pattern, or character, to music-making events. This pattern creates an experience of music-making and islandness particular to Clare Island.

On Clare Island, islandness (as outlined in the Introduction) is a set of defining limitations expressed through music-making and social participation. The size of the resident population and the availability of tourist accommodation imposes an upper limit on audience numbers or participants. Consequently, it is possible to predict (within a narrow range) approximate attendance at a community gathering or at summer music-making events. This pattern or predictability extends across time through the general rhythm of seasonal activity and the limitations of the venues for music-making. There are subtler examples of this pattern or predictability. During the summer months, observing the evening ferry indicates the possibility of music-making as all musicians and instruments arrive through this single channel. Also, to a lesser degree, the annual return of certain music groups—and audience familiarity with local and regional musicians—creates a predictability in the expected quality or genre of performances. These defining limitations or patterns present the contours of islandness on Clare Island. Additionally, music-making on the island reflects these contours as they change across time.

Chapter Two describes a healthy music-making environment on Clare Island. This is demonstrated through an active community body, the availability of performance spaces, a variety of participants, a functioning transport infrastructure, and a relatively large number of

local performers. Chapter Three further refines this analysis of music-making and island vitality through the example of the 2017 CCÉ Seisiún series at the Community Centre bar.

Chapter Three

The Community Centre: Traditional Music and Social Participation in Island Life

Introduction

Chapter Three examines the 2017 summer music-making series, or Seisiún, organised by the local Clare Island, or Granuaile, branch of CCÉ. Since their inauguration in 2009, the Seisiún has become a highlight in Clare Island music-making and an example of island vitality. In 2017, the CCÉ weekly music Seisiún was a key event in the music-making calendar at the Community Centre bar and a primary outlet for traditional music within the community. The CCÉ Seisiún is a key setting for examining island music traditions in the present, but also connects the ethnographic narrative to critical transformations in community life since Walsh's research in the 1950s. This chapter begins with a detailed account of the 2017 Seisiún series and traditional music performance within the community. Later, through a focus on house dances and set-dancing, the chapter examines the changing contexts of community music-making in the period circa 1945 to 1999.

Over this fifty-five-year period Clare Island underwent significant changes, both in terms of infrastructural developments and the structures of community social life. In the 1940s, the Clare Island parish hall opened and marked the first step in a shift from music-making in the home to music-making in public spaces. While this shift from private to public spaces was part of a wider national trend (Ní Fhuartháin 2019), this chapter uncovers the specific local and island influences in these changes. This timeline of change ends in 1999 with the opening of the Clare Island Community Centre. This building symbolises the final stage in a shift from self-sufficient music-making and community life to one reliant on outside inputs. While local efforts funded and built the parish hall in the 1940s, the construction of the Community Centre relied on total financial support from the State. In the 1940s, island music-making comprised islanders playing music for other islanders. By the start of the twenty-first century, the majority of music-making on Clare Island involved mainland musicians performing for a summer tourist audience. Against this backdrop of change, music-making and participatory performance remain as a constant in community life and source of island vitality.

1. Clare Island Community Centre

Figure 2: Exterior of Clare Island Community Centre. The bar is located on the right side of the building.

The Community Centre (Figure 2 above) has two principal functions in the Clare Island social landscape: first as the administrative centre for the Clare Island Development Company—and other associated bodies—and secondly as the location for the Community Centre bar. This rectangular structure consists of a large central sports hall flanked on either gable by two smaller wings. The hall, in effect, separates the two entities with the Development Office to the left side of the main structure and the bar to the right side. Both wings of the building have upstairs rooms while the hall is a double height space. The interior of the left wing is divided between office space for the Development Company (upstairs) and toilets (downstairs). The right wing houses a library space (upstairs), and a public bar complete with a commercial kitchen (downstairs). The building also contains additional facilities for the nearby island campsite. Within the Community Centre grounds there is outdoor seating, a carpark and a helipad for emergency medical airlifts. The Community Centre building is located on the east side of the island, close to the harbour, and directly beside the island's only sandy beach.

The Community Centre sports hall is the largest assembly and performance space on the island. Measuring approximately twelve by fifteen metres, the hall can accommodate up to two hundred and fifty people. The space exceeds the requirements of most island social

gatherings and is reserved for occasions with a larger attendance such as weddings, birthday parties, group dinner-dances, and other events with over eighty people. These events normally incorporate live music, and the Community Centre manager regularly constructs a temporary stage at one end of the room. A more consistent use of the hall is for the annual school Christmas concert and productions by the Clare Island drama group. Apart from this small number of events, the hall remains unused as a performance space for most of the year.

Figure 3: Interior of Community Centre bar taken from the entrance to the bar. Fieldwork photograph from Seisiún on 22 August 2017.

The bar occupies one downstairs room of the Community Centre building directly underneath the library room and beside the sports hall. However, in practice the functions of the bar spread out across the building. The bar (Figure 3) is a simple rectangular room (measuring approximately 7 metres long by 5 metres wide) with a bar counter running three-quarters along one length (left-hand side of Figure 3). Seating and tables are placed around the perimeter and a wooden floor in the middle acts as a dance floor or standing space for busier nights. Musicians perform in a corner of the room, underneath the wall-mounted television (and jukebox), beside the fireplace and in front of the fire-exit doors (top right in Figure 3). The musicians' corner—at the opposite end of the room from the main entrance—is the least trafficked spot in what can be a busy space. The bar room is the main site of music-making within the building. In 2017, this was the only public bar open year-round on

the island and was the site for off-season music-making—such as during the Christmas holiday period or on St. Patrick's Day. Since the construction of the Community Centre building in 1999, the bar is a central space for music-making and socialising on Clare Island. From 1999 to 2011, the bar operated with a limited club licence and could only serve members or guests of members. In 2011, the Community Centre Bar Committee purchased a full Publican's Licence and since then is fully open to the public.[9]

2. The Comhaltas Seisiún

The summer scheduling of the Clare Island, Granuaile branch Seisiún derives from a format directed by the parent body CCÉ. As a national—and international—cultural organisation, CCÉ (established in 1951) operates with the explicit aim of promoting traditional Irish music and culture (Fleming 2004; Henry 1989; Valley 2004). The CCÉ Seisiún is advertised nationally through flyers, posters, online, and hard copy media. The Comhaltas website gives the following description of the general format with reference to the 2015 summer series:

> Comhaltas Seisiún provides a unique traditional entertainment experience at over 50 venues throughout Ireland during July and August. It is a staged show of Irish music, song, dance and storytelling followed by an informal session with audience participation where all who wish to 'take to the floor'. Seisiún boasts the longest running Summer shows of its kind entertaining visitors from abroad and local audiences of all ages.[10]

The Seisiún is essentially a variety concert showcasing Irish traditional music and culture. Each Seisiún is organised by the local CCÉ branch and varies slightly according to local resources and design. In 2017, the Granuaile branch Seisiún was one of a series of forty-nine Seisiún's taking place in seventeen counties throughout Ireland. The Clare Island Seisiún takes place on Tuesday nights during the months of July and Augusts. While these CCÉ events are not explicitly a tourist presentation, the scheduling of the Seisiún coincides with the peak months of the Irish tourist season. Similarly, the Seisiún also falls within the high season for island tourism as outlined in Chapter Two.

While the national body, CCÉ, provides financial support for hiring musicians, the local Granuaile branch members are responsible for organising and running the events. Within the prescribed format, the Granuaile branch can alter events to match local needs. This is

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[9] The application for a full licence was objected to by some members of the community. This is outside the scope of this research but is notable because of coverage in the national press (Cullen 2011)

[10] "Comhaltas Seisiún 2015," n.d. Events, Comhaltas, accessed March 12, 2020. https://comhaltas.ie/events/seisiun.

exemplified in the choice and setting of the Community Centre bar as the Seisiún venue. Mainland CCÉ Seisiúns typically take place in hotel lounges, heritage centres, and other locations less overtly focused on the sale of alcohol. However, islanders must use the existing spaces and respond to the multifunctional demands of these performance venues. Granuaile Branch member Padraic O'Malley acknowledges that there are compromises in running the Seisiún in a public bar, but feels that it also increases the popularity of the event.

> We run [the Seisiún] in the bar in the Community Centre on Clare Island and ahem . . . on the mainland it would probably be run in a community hall . . . [the Granuaile Seisiún] it's in a more social setting . . . it's a nice little small bar, it works really well most of the time.

As highlighted in Chapter Two, some islanders oppose the centrality of the bar—with the associated focus on alcohol consumption—within community life (Wrafter 2013). However, the Community Centre barroom is both a practical and inclusive space for locals, visitors and tourists to participate in music-making.

The Granuaile Branch Seisiún adheres to a simple format and each week the committee hire a different group of musicians to perform as a musical anchor for the evening. These are usually mainland musicians, but every year one of the Seisiúns includes an "islander's night" with island musicians occupying this guest position. Alongside these core performers, an islander MC—fear an tí if male, or bean an tí if female—invites audience members to share their musical talents, in what is a casual and participatory environment. There is no amplification used at the Seisiún and the event relies on the cooperation of all those gathered to ensure performances are audible. At each Seisiún the role of MC is assigned, by the Granuaile branch committee, to different members or indeed to any islander willing to participate. During the 2017 season, a committee member asked me to "help out" and for the Seisiún on July 25 I acted as fear an tí. In this situation, my position as an island musician was more important than my lack of affiliation with CCÉ. While this role is divided between the sexes, I will—based on my own experience—default to the male title, fear an tí, for convenience.

The role and title of fear an tí (man of the house) directly references older Irish traditions of domestic music-making, house dances and visiting houses. Munnelly describes the widespread custom of visiting houses in rural Ireland and the role of the host in directing the flow of performance. This description mirrors a number of aspects of the Seisiún, particularly the performance etiquette:

Night-time would bring visitors to the house or people would go on their *cuaird* or house-visit to a favoured location where gossip would be exchanged, cards played and, frequently, storytelling, singing, music and dancing would be engaged in. Certain aspects of performer/ audience interaction in such social situations are worthy of comment. For example, the person in charge of the proceedings was occasionally the woman of the house where the neighbours congregated, but far more frequently the man of the house filled this role. This involved being aware of the knowledge of perceived "ownership" of songs and poems by certain individuals and making sure everyone took part. Custom demanded that audience and performer operated in a rigidly democratic manner and, at the request of the man of the house, all had to contribute something to the night's entertainment; virtuoso *raconteur*, mediocre fiddler or singer, all had to play their role. There is no suggestion here that the listeners did not differentiate between the better entertainer and a less talented brother or sister, but the rules of hospitality insisted on giving one and all the opportunity to contribute to the entertainment. (2001, 195)

This description of domestic music-making etiquette at a "visiting house" approximates the order and etiquette of the Seisiún at the Clare Island Community Centre bar. The Seisiún fear an tí performs a similar central role in the flow of events, but also in uniting the symbolic on-stage (musicians) and off-stage (audience) spaces. The fear an tí also provides an ambassadorial role for the guest musicians; particularly if they are first-time visitors to the island or unfamiliar with the pace of island events. Máirtín Moran is a Granuaile Branch member since 2009 and a regular fear an tí at the Seisiún. He suggests that the role is most effective when performed in a central but subtle manner:

I suppose the fear an tí or bean an tí, it's sort of a focal point . . . Kind of to keep the thing going and gather a few singers maybe or whatever, dancers or whatever . . . It is important I suppose to keep some semblance of order for a couple of hours . . . or to get a bit of silence for songs, or kind-of have some little bit of structure.

As a "focal point" the position of the fear an tí distinguishes the Seisiún from other events on the island. Unlike most other music events on Clare Island, the Seisiún follows a general pattern and usually begins and ends at a set time. The structured part of the Seisiún starts shortly after 9.30pm and continues until the fear an tí retires from the role at around midnight. At this point the music-making will either continue more informally or finish up, depending on those present.

Though the events follow a loose structure, the Seisiún is not a formal performance space. Etiquette requires that the audience give their attention to solo performances—singers, dancers, spoken-word pieces, one-off instrumentalists—but nowhere is there a demand for complete silence. This is in keeping with patterns of acceptable audience etiquette for

traditional music performance, particularly at informal music sessions. Munnelly describes typical audience behaviours at country house dances and traditional music sessions:

> The members of the audience too are performers with circumscribed roles. In Irish tradition they are not meant to be passive. Like it or not, a buzz of conversation is allowable when several musicians are playing dance music. It is less acceptable when a solo musician is playing, with the possible exception of accordion players. Conversation is frowned on during the playing of slow airs or singing of songs, yet verbal encouragement is not only allowed but expected. However, it must be perfunctory — *Mo cheol thú!* (lit. 'My music, you!' [= 'Well done]) *Nar laga Dia thú* ('More power to you!'), 'Good man/woman!', or some such remarks, preferably delivered only, between verses. Whoops and howls Occur, but are not considered to be in good taste by many. (2001, 200)

This description corresponds in many ways to audience behaviour at the Clare Island Seisiún and island audiences are typically warm and sociable. Verbal interjections on Clare Island are usually in English but similar in content. On an ideal Seisiún night, the atmosphere is more like a party than a show. Audience enjoyment and participation are measures of success, and memorable nights often include a level of noisiness. In Padraic's estimation, the casual atmosphere creates a domestic or familial setting: "Essentially, they are like a rambling house really . . . music, song, dance and recitation in an organised fashion". The Seisiún is like an event in a private home, where guests feel at ease but take direction from their host; which in this case is the fear an tí. Padraic's description of a "rambling house" references the rural traditions described by Munnelly (2001) but also island music-making practices in the past. Until the 1980s, the family home was a primary space for island music-making and for community gatherings. In many regards, the Seisiún nights at the Community Centre connect to earlier domestic practices (examined in detail later).

Although there are parallels with older domestic frameworks for music-making, several features differentiate the Seisiún from most other music-making events on the island: the events are planned and advertised through an outside body; they are programmed as guaranteed nights for traditional music; they adhere to participatory performance etiquette (as described by Munnelly); there is a similar pattern to the weekly iterations; there is an entrance fee (five euros payable at the door); and the proceedings are managed by a designated host. These factors combine to create a distinct performance event both within the Community Centre bar and in island social life.

Except for the Thursday night singer-songwriter nights at the Sailor's Bar (discussed in Chapter Four) the Seisiún is one of the few regular mid-week events. The setting of the Seisiún during mid-week was at first a novelty in the island social calendar. Prior to 2009,

scheduled music-making in summer took place only on weekend nights. Running the Seisiún on Tuesdays meant it did not compete with other events. By 2017, Tuesdays in July and August had become synonymous with the Comhaltas Seisiún and locals often refer to them as the "Tuesday sessions" (Field Notes, 12 December 2018). Outside of the 2017 high-season, Tuesdays were, like other mid-week days, a quiet day with little socialising and no organised music-making.

Audience numbers at the Seisiún vary from week to week. Factors such as the weather, the popularity of the particular guest musicians with locals, the exact week of summer, and proximity to other major events influences audience attendance. A regular cohort of islanders attends every Seisiún, but over the course of the summer most attendees are visitors and tourists. By island standards (as discussed previously in Chapter Two) the events are generally well attended. For example, on 24 July 2017 there were some forty people in the bar at the start of the evening and more arrived as the night progressed. Busier nights can see up to eighty people squeezed into the space with little room for movement or aural space for listening. On most Tuesday nights, the Seisiún presents an inclusive space for social interaction and music-making. Their format and earlier start time makes the Seisiún popular with visiting families, elderly islanders, and those who avoid busier (louder) weekend nights.

Musicians and Music in 2017

Performers at the Clare Island Seisiún fall into three categories: the guest musicians booked to play music throughout the evening; the attendees (local and visitors) who perform regularly at the Seisiún; and, the succession of visitors and tourists who give one-off performances. The core music-makers at the event are the guest musicians paid to keep the flow of music going regardless of the vagaries of any given night. Members of the Granuaile branch make these bookings and the weekly budget covers a fee for two musicians. Bookings are generally word-of-mouth and fuelled by personal acquaintance or recommendation.

Most guest musicians at the 2017 Seisiún came from the Mayo or Galway region. The musicians at the Seisiún are often repeat invitees and some have performed many times at the event in preceding years. The annual islander's night spotlights island performers but mainland musicians often join in as "friends of the island". While bookings are usually for two musicians, others sometimes join for the trip to Clare Island. The weekly Clare Island newsletter (compiled and distributed on the island by the Community Employment scheme)

advertises the upcoming guest musicians during the summer months. The 2017 Seisiún series guests—plus the main instruments performed—were as follows:

4 July	Darragh Healy (accordion) and Michael Healy (banjo/guitar	Co. Mayo
11 July	Willie Brennan (accordion) and Monica Brennan (guitar/vocals)	Co. Galway.
18 July	The Tiernan Family (accordion/fiddle/keyboard/guitar/vocals)	Co. Mayo
25 July	Camilus Hiney (accordion) and friends (banjo/bodhran/vocals)	Co. Offaly.
1 August	Julie Langan (fiddle) and Freda Hatton (concertina)	Co. Mayo
8 August	Paddy Gorham (accordion) and Red Connolly (banjo/vocals)	Co. Galway and Co. Mayo.
15 August	Stephen Doherty (accordion) and friends (fiddle/guitar/vocals)	Co. Mayo
22 August	Islanders' night (accordion/concertina/fiddle/guitar/vocals)	
29 August	Victor Alexander (accordion) and friends (harp/guitar)	Co. Mayo

The audio-scape of the evening revolves around Irish traditional dance music (Breathnach 1996 [1971]; Brennan 1999; Ó hAllmhuráin 2003; Ó Canainn 1993), but it regularly crosses minor genre boundaries. The Seisiún on Clare Island is an open forum, and locals regularly encourage tourists to perform. Because of this inclusiveness, many of the Seisiún nights on Clare Island feature one or more performances from another tradition. The widest diversity of musical genres occurs with song performance. In 2017 this included Irish ballads, country and western, Americana, international folk song (in English, Danish, Basque, Spanish and French), songs from Broadway musicals, blues, and contemporary popular music. This is not unique to the Seisiún on Clare Island. Both Kaul (2009) and Kneafsey (2002) describe traditional music sessions with a similar inclusiveness where Irish traditional material and popular genres are performed side by side.

At the Clare Island Seisiún, the guest musicians perform mainly for a listening audience, but also as an accompaniment for traditional Irish dancing (predominantly by

locals). Most of the 2017 Seisiún nights included performances of solo dancing (sean-nós style) or group dances (set-dances) to reels. Participants regularly danced polkas, but only as a figure in ensemble set-dance patterns. Hornpipes and waltzes were less frequently performed. On several occasions during the 2017 season, islanders danced the local Clare Island half-set in jig time (this is discussed later). Nevertheless, the majority of audience performances at the 2017 Seisiún was through singing or oral recitation.

Participation and warmth

Social interaction and participatory performance are the central goal of the Clare Island Seisiún. This is evident in the management of the acoustic environment and the balance between musical sounds and the sounds of social interaction. In my role as fear an tí in 2017 (and repeated in 2018), individuals frequently expressed their displeasure whenever crowd noise was louder than the music. However, at the Clare Island Seisiún there is the understanding that the music must endure a reasonable level of conversation. This was most clearly suggested by the welcome address of one particular bean an tí who asked that the audience keep silent when singers were performing but reassured people that they could talk while the music was playing (Field Notes, 1 August 2017). While this wording was an overstatement of acceptable audience behaviours, it nonetheless reveals the assumption that instrumental music is just one part of the soundscape of social interaction and music-making. This balance of non-musical and musical sounds corresponds with Munnelly's assessment that performance etiquette in the Irish tradition permits (or even expects) audience conversation and the sounds of social interaction (2001, 200).

Musical performance at the Seisiún creates an overlap between Turino's conceptions of presentational and participatory forms of music-making (outlined in Chapter One). The musicians' corner—as a nominal stage area reserved for performers—signifies presentational performance aesthetics, but the musicians occupy a sonic space that is neither fully in the foreground or background. Similarly, the organisation of the evening creates a loose structure rather than a fixed performance schedule. Máirtín Moran suggests that a successful Seisiún requires a balance between order (structure) and more free-form social interactions. As a fear an tí, he believes it is important (in the early part of the evening) to direct the Seisiún with some organisation, but that audience also need opportunity to interact socially:

> After twelve o'clock or whatever, let it go, let people [talk] . . . because if people are silent or quiet like you know . . . some people don't come down because they feel they can't talk!

The audience at each Seisiún must work together to establish their own level of social interaction and music-making. On a balanced night the music-making continues into the early hours of the morning, and often additional musicians join in after the more formal early part of the evening.

In 2017, the stage area—musicians' corner—was open to all, but the inclusiveness of the instrumental music session varied according to the particular guest musicians. With the guidance of the fear an tí, one-off performances by audience members were interspersed between selections of instrumental music. On a typical night, one or two performances of song, dance or recitation bookend sets of tunes throughout the evening. An essential role of the fear an tí is to encourage these audience contributions and establish the open, inclusive, or warm, atmosphere of the event. In the early part of a Seisiún evening, the fear an tí calls upon individuals—locals or repeat visitors known for a particular talent or party piece—to contribute something to the entertainment. In this manner the fear an tí is akin to the host at the Irish visiting house (Munnelly 2001, 195). As a person familiar with the talents of frequent visitors, the host uses insider knowledge to build a flow of performances. Similarly, the fear an tí at the Seisiún uses their knowledge of Clare Island music-making to identify performers and estimate in what capacity (or what point in the evening) they might perform. In Padraic's experience, the warmth of the Seisiún format and setting uncovers an abundance of participatory talents:

> It's amazing the amount of people that are there that want to participate . . .
> sometimes it's difficult to get people to perform, but somehow that Seisiún
> creates that atmosphere where people feel comfortable to sing their song, or
> recite their poem, or do a dance, or sing a song in their own tradition,
> language or culture. And I think that's probably been one of the great
> successes of the Seisiúns.

In a similar tone, Máirtín recognises the importance of the openness and warmth of the Seisiún in encouraging otherwise reticent performers:

> Sometimes [early in the evening], if you ask people "any singers?" [they
> say] "Oh no, no". But then as the night is going on and they're getting into
> it and the craic is good . . . someone will say "oh, my friend will sing".
> They warm up when they see how it's going, it's great that way.

Ó Laoire (2005) examines the concept of *teas* (heat or warmth) as both a figurative and literal ideal in music-making on Tory island, Co. Donegal. Music-making generates heat and a social closeness (warmth) in the moment of participation. Ó Laoire suggests that this warmth epitomises communal bonding where individual participants are "warmed by a fellow feeling

toward each other" (2005, 163). This concept of fellow feeling is similar to the idea of *communitas* (Turner 2012) as an expression of spontaneous social bonding. Through the social warmth of the Seisiún, all those gathered in the Community Centre bar participate in a temporary music-making community.

The Seisiún is open to anyone who wishes to contribute through performance and the role of the fear an tí is to breakdown distinctions between audience and performers. Turino observes that the specialisation of music-making in modern capitalist societies separates individuals along lines of musical ability or lack thereof; one is considered musically talented or not. This engenders both popular assumptions about musical competence and also undermines the expression of musical abilities by non-specialists (Turino 2008, 98). The Seisiún frames performance as a range of social interactions centred around musical sounds. As a performance event it exemplifies Small's conception of musicking as, "an activity in which all those present are involved and for whose nature and quality, success or failure, everyone present bears some responsibility" (1998, 10). The Seisiún is composed of multiple parts, all of which interacting to form a whole. The guest musicians, the fear an tí, the individual performers, and the non-performing audience all contribute to the participatory warmth of the evening.

Cycles of return

In any week of the summer, Clare Island is host to a number of repeat visitors, some of whom return during the same month year after year. The Seisiún acts as a backdrop to a rotating cast of island visitors; a constant flow of characters and conversations that stretch out from one summer season to the next. The seasonal cycle of tourism, music-making and social interaction is well established on Clare Island. In Brody's archetypal Inishkillane the summer period is an important positive counterweight to the social doldrums of the rest of the year. In his ethnography, visitors and tourists provide an impetus for music-making and a distraction from "the prolonged withdrawal and quiet of the Irish countryside" (Brody 1973, 38). Writing in the 1950s, Heinrich Böll was less pessimistic about the quality of life during the off-season on Achill Island, Co Mayo. Böll notes with some humour how tourism impacted the social life of locals as pub opening hours mirrored the timetables of seasonal tourism:

> When Seamus wants a drink he must decide on when to order his thirst: as long as there are tourists in the place . . . he can allow his thirst some degree of licence, for tourists may drink whenever they are thirsty, so that the native can confidently take his place among them at the bar . . . But after September 1, Seamus has to regulate his thirst. Closing time on weekdays is 10 P.M., and that's bad enough, for during the

warm, dry days of September Seamus often works until half-past nine, sometimes longer. (2011 [1957], 73)

Pub opening hours on Clare Island are similarly influenced by the summer tourist trade, and opening hours are greatly reduced during the off-season. But tourism is only one factor in the seasonal cycles of island social life. Summer is also the period when members of the extended island diaspora return on annual or more occasional visits. From the 1950s onwards, the return of relatives or migrant workers during the summer period was an important impetus for music-making on Clare Island (Walsh 1958, 340). This was part of a wider pattern of summer visits by Irish emigrants and diaspora—mostly returning from the United Kingdom—to rural Ireland. This migrant experience, and their connection to rural Ireland, is examined in detail by Sara Hannafin (2019) and others (Ní Fhuartháin 2018; Leonard 2005). Cyril McCabe explains how in the 1960s the cycles of returning island emigrants created a seasonal trend in island music-making independent from the tourist industry. In his opinion there was a sizeable influx of holidaying migrants and diaspora every summer:

> The amount of people who were coming home at the time . . . I mean Clare Island didn't have any tourists, but it was a busy, busy spot in the summer. Just from all the people coming home from England.

Cyril observes that most of the neighbouring families were quite large, with eight or nine children per household. As these children became young adults, many emigrated together and also returned home on holidays to Clare Island at the same time:

> You see, an awful lot of people left Clare Island and went off to England in those years . . . Most of them when they went away they made good money and they'd come home every summer. They'd arrange it that a whole load of them would come home together, so there was a good gang and a good bit of fun. Like the Moran's and the Bob's and the Jamsie's they were all related, they might all come home at the same time. Pick their holidays at the same time so they'd all be home together.

The presence of these holidaying migrants gave opportunity for multiple nights of music-making during the summer. In the 1960s house dances were the most popular setting for socialising and music-making on the island:

> You'd have a big gang of people looking for fun, looking for dances, looking for the craic. A dance could be in Mick Moran's tonight, it could be in Charlie Brian's the following night, or up in Jerry's. You know, it could be Strake, it could be out the north, it could be anywhere, and they could be six nights in a row. There could be a dance every night!

While family size and patterns of migration have changed on Clare Island in recent decades, the legacy of this late twentieth century emigrant population is still present in 2017. Second

and third generation islanders continue to join the summer milieu, and some are regular seasonal contributors to island music-making. While the settings of music-making in 2017 are different to Cyril's description, the glut of summer activity remains.

3. Set-dancing and community vitality

The Granuaile CCÉ branch is one of eighteen active community groups on Clare Island during the research period. These groups range from loose associations of interest to formal structured entities. Some of these have a long history in the community: the parish council was established in 1942 (Walsh 1958, 251); the island drama group are active since the 1950s; and the formal entity of Cliara Development Company was created in 1983. With a small population, and an even smaller pool of participating adults, community groups place heavy demand on the limited resources of people power. Alongside busy personal lives, most of the CCÉ Granuaile committee members are active in other community bodies. The success of community groups regularly depends on the availability of active membership, and Peace (2001) discusses the role of associations and volunteer groups in maintaining community vitality. There is a long history of community associations in rural Ireland and associational culture played a central role in nineteenth century socio-political movements in Ireland (Comerford and Kelly 2010) and internationally (Morton, Morris and de Vries 2006).

The Granuaile branch was formed in the late 1990s through the efforts of the Clare Island Development Office. However, there was little discernible interest in the branch during its first decade; it existed in name, but with no notable community activity. In 2009, new membership led to the development of the current, active version of the Granuaile branch. Padraic O'Malley recalls the group motivation at the time:

> [In 2009] a good few extra people got involved in it: Noel Clarke [Teacher] at the time in the school, Margaret O'Grady, myself, Jane O'Toole, Máirtín Moran, and maybe others now that I can't recall at the moment. But that was it . . . a small enough group . . . Comhaltas is a national organisation and it's promoting traditional music, and we could see that being involved in it and maybe being connected with other groups could benefit from the promotion of traditional music on the island. That's what I got involved in it for, and also that it could help our tourism industry as well. But predominantly just to foster the tradition here on the island, you know, and enhance it.

Alongside the Seisiún, the Granuaile branch also organises an annual Féile Ceoil weekend (30 June–2 July 2017) that includes performances, workshops, and a variety concert featuring

island and visiting musicians. While the Féile Ceoil is an annual event since 1998, prior to 2009 it was run by a separate island based committee. The Granuaile branch also performs an important role in promoting traditional Irish dancing amongst the younger generation of islanders. Under the umbrella of the branch, islanders have competed in county and regional competitions. In 2013, an under-eighteen group competed in the set-dancing category at the annual *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* (the All-Ireland Music Festival) in Derry.

The 2017 Seisiúns revealed a strong practice of traditional dancing amongst younger islanders. This popularity—in the under twenty-five age group—is directly linked to a resurgence of interest in Irish traditional music on the island in the early 2000s. As highlighted in Chapter Two, regular instruction in Irish traditional music began in the school circa 2004. Around this same period, Margaret O'Grady—the island public health nurse—began weekly set-dancing classes during the winter months for school children or any interested islanders. Margaret is a blow-in (married to an islander) and an active member of the Granuaile branch. Under Margaret's direction, the Seisiún became a key performance outlet for these dance lessons from 2009 onwards. At the time of writing in 2020, most islanders under the age of twenty-five have participated at some point in Margaret's dance classes.

Displays of group set-dancing and solo sean-nós dancing by younger islanders were a regular highlight of the Seisiún in 2017. These were rarely spontaneous performances and instead resulted from some pre-planning, with either the fear an tí or another branch member encouraging the young dancers to participate. The performances of dance by the island teenagers, particularly sean-nós dancing, caused notable excitement amongst the audience. One could regularly observe the entire room absorbed in the display and a dozen or more audience members filming the dancers. Over the course of the summer, tourists regularly commented that they enjoyed seeing the younger islanders maintaining the old traditions. However, the sean-nós style of step-dancing is a recent addition popularised through Margaret O'Grady's dance classes and reflects a wider revival of sean-nós (Ní Bhriain 2008; Wulff 2007) rather than Clare Island traditions.

Dancing as social-life

Two of Padraic O'Malley's sons were regular dance participants at the Seisiún nights in 2017. I asked Padraic if he notices any difference between set-dancing in 2017 and when he was a twenty-year-old in 1987:

You know it was very spontaneous when we were [young] it just happened. Now there's dancing . . . [at the Comhaltas Seisiún] and that's an organised night. And so there's dancers organised to dance at it. The spontaneity of dancing still happens, but a little bit more organisation has to go into it, or they seem to be have to be cajoled a little bit more, even though they've probably put more time into rehearsing than we did. So, that's a change, I think.

In his recollection, dance was a social pursuit in his youth rather than a performance display; it was a repeated activity performed for the enjoyment of the dancers. Historically, group dances or set-dances (sets) were a mainstay of island music-making and a regular part of social gatherings:

I think, at any gathering really in the pub, where there'd be traditional music, if you didn't have a set or a couple of sets, it would never be felt that you had 'real night' really like.

Padraic suggests that the intricacy, and the performative aspect of dances in 2017, creates a different approach and expectation when compared to dancing in the 1980s:

I suppose because they're dancing sets they've learned, that they've been taught, and there might be a little bit more intricacy in them. If you don't know [the steps] and you haven't attended the dance lessons, you're probably not able to dance them. So therefore, you kind of feel . . . so you won't dance unless you've rehearsed.

Padraic recalls that the most popular set-dance in the 1980s was the Clare Island half-set, a dance that was often learned as part of wider socialisation. In his opinion, the emphasis on more intricate patterns and correct form undermines the participatory value of dancing:

It would concern me slightly, that people might stop dancing saying "oh well, if I don't rehearse I can't dance". Which shouldn't be the way . . . you should just dance and pick it up.

Máirtín Moran also notes the difference in the approach of the younger dancers. He feels that as a performance display their dances are more aesthetically pleasing than what he learned in the 1960s:

Like they're probably better dancers now, they're more technical, keep the time and that. It's lovely to watch.

However, he also perceives that there is not the same passion for dancing in 2017 compared to the past. He suggests that in the past dancers were more engaged with the activity and showed great enthusiasm—putting "great life" into group participation through dance.

At several of the 2017 Seisiúns, an older group of islanders danced the Clare Island half-set as part of the evening's entertainment. This dance is a local variant of traditional group or set-dances found throughout Ireland. Irish set-dances connect historically to continental (mainland) European forms. Orfhlaith Ní Bhriain (2008, 16) describes how dances such as the cotillion and the quadrille became fashionable in Ireland during the early nineteenth century. Writing in 1971, Breandán Breathnach describes how set-dances—and local variants such as the Clare Island half-set—evolved as an Irish response to these continental styles. Rural Irish dance teachers, or dancing masters, adapted the imported forms:

> by substituting native steps for the ballroom steps and by speeding up the time to that of the jig and common reel. Thus, naturalised, the sets of quadrilles (shortened to "sets" and so called when four couples took part, and to "half sets" when two couples danced) spread throughout the country. (1996 [1971], 46)

The first figure of the Clare Island half-set is danced to jigs, and after a pause the second figure is danced to polkas. As Breathnach explains, it is a half-set because there are four people (two couples) dancing instead of the eight people required for a full set. The half-set required fewer dancers and could be performed in smaller spaces, such as offered by the rural cottages.

In dancing the Clare Island half-set, these older islanders were performers at the Seisiún and occupied the stage area of the dance floor. However, they were also enacting a form of socialising that characterised community life in the past. Islander Michael Barrett (1932–2017) remembered other dances that have since disappeared in the island, but recognised the consistency of the Clare Island half-set since at least the 1940s:

> We used to dance the Haymakers Jig and The Waves of Tory . . . I never saw the sean-nós dancing until it was started here [in the 2000s]. I never seen . . . even old-time waltzes I never seen them danced . . . It was always the half-set . . . the half-set has never changed, it's still the same half set.

The Clare Island half-set is a direct reference to the house dances, and the participatory music-making (Turino 2008), that shaped island social-life for much of the twentieth century. Through this dance pattern, islanders connected somatically into older traditions and symbolically into older forms of community music-making.

The longevity of the Clare Island half-set is evidence of its cultural functionality. Padraic emphasised the relative ease with which one could learn the form and the convivial sociability of dancing the half-set. While learning the form was important, it was secondary

to the social function of dance as communal participation. Raphaelle McCabe learned to dance the Clare Island half-set at house dances in the 1960s and recalls how participation was the central aim of music-making at the time:

> There were good dancers, and there were people who had two left-feet [laughs]. It didn't matter you had to go out, like if you were around at all and you were asked to dance, there was no such thing as refusing, you know. You just went and you had your half-set . . . or whatever it is you were doing.

According to Raphaelle, social interaction, or participatory performance, was the main goal of this music-making activity where people "were encouraged to join in regardless of the quality of their contributions" (Turino 2008, 35). In Turino's model of participatory performance, the Clare Island half-set can be understood as "a special type of direct social intercourse" (2008, 87). This dance presented music-making as a social process and as part of community or social conversation.

Alongside such meta-level functions, dancing was a central form of entertainment or pastime for much of the twentieth century. Raphaelle notes that in the absence of personal multi-media technology, entertainment relied heavily on community and social interaction:

> [Islanders] didn't always want to dance, but generally that was their [thing they liked to do]. We'll say, like someone watching telly now; they wanted to dance. And it was an opportunity, you know, they'd meet somebody else from the other end of the island.

Dancing was a primary form of sociability and community interaction; as fundamental to normal interactions as having a conversation (Turino 2008, 29). Similarly, during the 1950s Walsh observed the importance of music-making—particularly the activities surrounding dance—in providing both an outlet for social entertainment and in maintaining community on Clare Island:

> It is through such institutions as visiting, and the house and station dances, that the social life of the island continues to flourish in spite of the decrease in population. Were it not for these activities the average family would be unlikely to meet any people other than their immediate neighbours, fellow villagers and kin. These institutions ensure that a person's field of social intercourse is extended to include more or less everyone in the community. (1958, 352)

According to Walsh's findings, music-making (dance in particular) was one of the few social "institutions" delaying the inevitable decline of the island community. While her conclusions about the future of the island were wrong, Walsh correctly identified the role of music-making in sustaining community life, or vitality.

Several authors describe the centrality of set-dancing in Irish rural and island communities. Both Ó Criomhthain (2000 [1937]) and Ó Súilleabháin (2000 [1933]) thread community dancing through their accounts of life on the Blaskets, while Taylor (2013) describes the widespread popularity of house dances in rural Co. Clare. Although many factors contributed to the evacuation of island communities in the twentieth century, a decline in social life and dancing correlates with a decline in island vitality. In ethnographic research conducted on Gola, Co. Donegal in 1968, Brody reports that dancing was non-existent in community life and had been for some time (Aalen and Brody 1969, 99). He suggests that there was "an absence of indigenous social life" (ibid) on Gola in the years of community decline. The last fulltime residents left Gola in 1970.

On Clare Island, set-dancing continued as a popular form of social interaction and music-making throughout the twentieth century. Through the activities of the Granuaile branch (dance lessons and competition) and the performance outlet of the Seisiún, traditional Irish set-dancing features in island music-making up to the present. In 2017, Padraic O'Malley's children are part of the latest generation in an unbroken lineage of island set-dancers. However, while set-dancing—and the Clare Island half-set—continues to be a part of island life, the patterns of socialising and music-making connected to dance have changed in recent decades.

4. Dancing in the kitchen

In the early part of the twentieth century, the home—or more precisely the cottage kitchen—was the primary hub for community life and music-making throughout rural Ireland (Dowling 2010; Glassie 2006; Ó hAllmhuráin 2005). According to Taylor, the cottage kitchens were both convenient venues for dancing and "central to the fabric of social life in rural Ireland" (2003, 107). From the 1930s onwards there was a marked decrease in community music-making in private houses; although in certain rural areas (and islands) the custom continued. By the middle decades of the century, music-making in Ireland occurred mostly in public spaces (Coady 1996; Hall 1999; Ní Fhuartháin 2019). On Clare Island this shift from private homes to public space was a gradual one. Until the 1980s, island homes remained significant venues for music-making and community interaction. Although the Clare Island parish hall offered an additional (dedicated) space for dancing from the 1940s to the 1970s, the use of the cottage kitchen remained consistent throughout the period.

On Clare Island, house dances depended on the inclination of householders and circumstances of daily life. As described above by Cyril McCabe, islanders organised dances to celebrate return visits of migrants and holidaying relatives. Other occasions for house dances included community events such as weddings, or the American wake held as a farewell to departing emigrants (Vallely 2011, 11). However, the most consistent, island wide, basis for house dances resulted from the tradition of celebrating Catholic Mass in island homes. Until their decline in the 1980s this tradition, known as the station Mass or stations, was a key point in the social calendar. The house dance held on the night of the stations was a highlight in island community life, and many of the islanders who danced the Clare Island half-set in 2017 learned to dance at station dances. The consistency of these dances—from the 1940s until the 1980s—makes them a useful model for exploring island music-making in this historical timeframe.

The stations

Historian Emmet Larkin (1984, 67–70) describes how the custom of the home, or station, Mass developed from private religious gatherings held during the period of Catholic persecution from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. While the tradition of the station Mass has largely declined, the practice remains in parts of rural Ireland into the twenty-first century (McHugh 2014). During the twentieth century, the stations were common in parts of rural Ireland and anthropologist Lawrence Taylor records the practice in rural Co. Donegal during the 1970s and 1980s (1995, 36).

Writing in 1968, Archbishop Joseph Cunnane describes the practice of the stations in the West of Ireland and notes their importance as both a religious and a social occasion:

> By arrangement with the people the priests twice a year visited each townland, offering Mass and hearing confessions in one of the houses—each house was expected to 'take the stations' on its turn . . . Among the people the coming of the stations came to be recognised as an important social as well as religious occasion and this also continues down to the present. Confessions, Mass, sermon and the collection which is a traditional feature of the station are followed by a meal in which the visiting clergy are treated to the best the family can afford and sometimes, one fears, better than they can afford. Customs vary from district to district, but in many cases the hospitality of the station house is extended to all the neighbours and sometimes the meeting is prolonged throughout the day and continues into the night. (1968, 563–564)

Cunnane suggests that the stations varied in form across rural Ireland, but hosting the event was invariably a matter of pride and expense. Alongside their religious function, the stations were an opportunity to host and provide hospitality to clergy and neighbours.

On Clare Island, the stations followed the format described by Cunnane. During the station periods (one in spring and one in autumn) the island priest selected one or two houses in each village to host the stations. Each station period took place over a week and sometimes included up to eight different station houses (Walsh 1958, 311). Over the course of a few years, the pattern of hosting rotated through the island households, after which the cycle started again. Preparations began in the days and weeks leading up to the event. The homeowner painted the building and gave a spring clean to the surrounding property. The day of the station began with Mass in the morning, in the house, attended by the household and village neighbours. Afterwards, the host family invited the priest and adult members of the village to a meal and an afternoon of socialising. Raphaelle McCabe describes the general order of events on the day and comments on the minor luxuries of island life in the 1950s and 1960s:

> You'd have the Mass in the morning and you'd have snacks . . . sandwiches, teas, coffees, whatever . . . for the priest and that . . . So, in the morning it was for the neighbours, then in the evening time the whole island would turn up. Again, there would be tea and sandwiches served down in the room, and the neighbours would bake cakes. Some people went to the expense of cooking chickens and things like that, but mostly it was just sandwiches and lots of cakes and tea. There was no alcohol in those days, people couldn't afford it.

Alongside the religious associations, the stations were an opportunity for the host family to show-off modest signs of prosperity such as food and home decoration.

The station dance occurred that night, with invitations issued to neighbours and individuals from other villages. Social etiquette determined who from the wider community received an invitation to the dance. The ideal guest list included equal representations from each village or family group (Walsh 1958, 316). However, as Michael Barrett observes, it was also impractical to invite everyone: "They couldn't ask the whole island because the kitchens were too small". Householders were not obliged to host a dance, and those experiencing recent bereavement—or with sick or elderly occupants—would forgo the night time portion of the stations.

The structure and formality of the stations gave the station dance a heightened meaning compared to ordinary house dances. In his memoir of growing up on Clare Island in the 1940s, O'Grady recalls the sense of excitement surrounding the station dance:

> The dance held in the station house had a special significance, as it was always thought to be more enjoyable than an ordinary house dance. The musicians played their hearts out, and some even travelled from the mainland for the occasion. There was no shortage

of singers, and the sing-song was interspersed with the dancing of "half sets" and the "Stack of Barley". (O'Grady 2007, 197)

Walsh describes a station dance (taking place in 1956 or 1957) and captures the enthusiasm surrounding the event. She observes that both hosts and guests treated the event with a certain formality and were eager to impress each other:

> The host and hostess stand at the door and welcome each visitor, as he arrives, both shaking him by the hand, while a sister of the wife will take the visitors' coat and he will do his best to find a seat on the benches . . . Everyone is dressed in their best clothes, the men in suits, the older men wearing caps, even when they are dancing, to hide their thinning hair, the girls wearing taffeta dresses from America, makeup, nylons and jewellery . . . The walls are covered in fresh whitewash, which brushes off on to the men's dark suits as they stand talking and smoking, leaning against the walls. (1958, 317)

The station dance typifies participatory performance with the aim of including as many people as possible (Turino 2008, 26). The music for the dance was performed—usually on an accordion or fiddle—by one or two islanders capable of sustaining the rhythm for the dancers. Occasionally a single instrument circulated through the room, as various guests took turns to maintain the rhythmic energy for the dancers. Although dancing was the central focus of the evening, solo performances of singing and instrumental airs were interspersed throughout the evening. Walsh describes the dancing and notes the continued pace of events. Variations in the flow and type of performance allowed multiple opportunities for participation:

> The dances are sets . . . in which only four couples take part, or "half sets" in which only two couples take part. The sets are extremely energetic and take about three minutes to complete. They will be varied by a fast waltz, or when people become too tired, by a song played, while everyone sits and talks. (1958, 318)

She continues with interesting observations of intermingling between age groups and sexes. The dance floor is governed by certain custom and etiquette, but the overall atmosphere of the evening is convivial. This is a picture of total community participation with music as a social glue:

> The music begins, and the men step out on to the floor, to be joined after the introductory bars of the set by their partners, who are never invited openly . . . but by a wink, a sign, or merely a jerk of the head. There is a complete mingling of people of different ages, boys of fifteen dancing with girls of thirty, men of fifty with girls of sixteen . . . While the dancing is going on the guests chat together and joke with each other, men and women talking to each other, often indulging in the telling of bawdy stories, and in mild flirtations. The older men gather in a corner by the fireside and

smoke, not joining in the dancing, while the children of the house watch quietly and unobtrusively. (1958, 319)

According to Walsh's description above, dancing occurred over many hours with little or no formal organisation. The form and setting of the dancing was fully enculturated and largely non-verbal.

In contrast to the group dancing, individual performances of song required a different level of structure and verbal interaction. Walsh describes the etiquette of gentle persuasion required during this concluding portion of the evening:

When people become exhausted with dancing the singing begins, those known to be good singers being persuaded to sing. Most people are very reluctant to do so, and will need a great deal of persuasion, which is usually given either by the host, hostess, or by a daughter of the house . . . The singing will usually continue for about an hour, each singer being duly applauded when he finishes, and it is usually the prelude to the end of the dance, after which people begin to collect their coats and wander home. (1958, 321)

This performance behaviour was not confined to the stations or Clare Island and Munnelly (2001) describes similar etiquette of persuasion at house dances throughout Ireland. Ó Laoire details the cultural significance (2005, 82) of this performance etiquette, and the role of song as entertainment in a community setting (2005, 125–156).

The role of the host in coordinating the individual singers at the stations is similar to the role of the fear an tí at the Seisiún nights in 2017. Several other characteristics of the station dance find parallel in the Seisiún. Like the station dance, the Seisiún features a mixing of age groups, a balance between music and socialising, and an etiquette of gentle persuasion for enticing solo performers. The events contrast at many structural levels, but the main— perhaps crucial—difference in music-making is in the changing role of participatory dancing. At the Seisiún, dancing is primarily a presentational showpiece performed for an audience. At the stations, dancing was a participatory social event performed as an expression of community interaction, neighbourliness and personal enjoyment.

The stations, as an organised religious event, created predictable cycles of celebration within the community. This period of intense social activity, community bonding and music-making is unrivalled in twenty-first century island life. In some regards, the Comhaltas Seisiún mirrors the regularity of the stations as an annual cycle of music-making. But, unlike the stations, the Seisiún does not depend on the involvement of the entire community or as wide a range of community resources.

Dancing as community

The stations represented the epitome of community interaction balanced with family life, domestic spaces and annual or seasonal cycles. In 2017, many older islanders concur with O'Grady's assessment of heightened meaning, or "special significance" (2007, 197), surrounding the station dance. Chris O'Grady recalls how growing up in the 1940s, he was aware of the social significance and opportunity for participation:

> As kids we were always delighted to have [the station dance] because we were invited . . . And it would be a big hoo-ha you know in the house for the night and we looked forward to those sessions like nobody's business as young lads.

As an inclusive space, the station dance was often the first opportunity for young islanders to engage with participatory music-making and join in community activities.

The station dances were a measure of the musical possibilities in island life and the contours of the community as represented through music-making. Ward notes a similar educational function at community dances in a Scottish island community. Through the community dance or *Céilidh*, island children are enculturated to island social life. Alongside learning the dance forms, the dance event is an opportunity to teach correct social etiquette:

> Parents encouraged their nervous offspring to approach un-partnered individuals, often the elderly islanders sitting around the dance floor, who often took great delight in accompanying the young dancers. Other forms of protocol were also instilled: one should never run on the dancefloor, a male dancer should always hold a female dancer firmly but gently, one must never refuse a dance invitation, and so on. (2015, 45)

John Hoban—a long-time visitor and performing musician on Clare Island—described music-making at house dances as being analogous to an Irish *meitheal* or community Co-operative. One ultimately learned the music, dance forms and social etiquette by participating within the group setting (Field Notes, 27 July 2019).

Clare Island children often attended the station dance accompanied by parents or older siblings. Raphaelle McCabe attended her first station dance in 1958 when she was twelve years of age. At first, she was just an observer to the adults dancing, but over time became a full participant:

> For the first [house dances], it was just looking at the adults dancing and you wouldn't have been out dancing yourself. . . when I was very small, say five or six . . . [my mother] taught us how to dance in the kitchen . . . so that we'd know how to dance whenever we got to a [station].

Learning the dance steps was an important part of a child's socialisation, but not everyone learned to dance in the home. Some islanders recall the stations—and house dances in general—as a space for embodied learning and practice. Padraic O'Malley recalls being thrust into a process of learning through participation:

> My first introduction to the Clare Island half set, I think it was back in the house of Billy Gallagher, or Billy Gallagher's mother. And, there was music there [and I was] pushed out on the floor to dance the half-set, and I think that was the first time I probably ever danced apart from in school.

Through the stations, children encountered live music as part of a wider sphere of social interaction rather than staged performance. The station dances were also a place where island children learned about instrumentation and island performance norms. Máirtín Moran remembers attending station dances with his parents and seeing live music for the first time:

> Like you wouldn't be officially going to dances, but like if there was house dances in the village you'd go. But that would be my earliest memory of music, of live music . . . I'd go with my parents.

Máirtín's comment also reveals the inclusive social setting of the station dance compared with other "dances". Cyril McCabe offers another memory and an interesting moment in his own musical education:

> The first time I ever heard two musicians playing together was Pat Mac and Chris Leary, one playing the fiddle and one playing the box. I never realised musicians could play together before that.

Ensemble playing was not typical in the compact cottage kitchens, and the possibilities of group performance were superfluous to the basic requirements of dancing. The same observation may have extended to repertoire and Messenger claims that on Inis Oirr accordionists only played four tunes to accompany dancing (1969, 118). He implies a general poverty of musical material on the island. On the other hand, Taylor records a preference for familiar, and limited, repertoire amongst dancers at house dances in Co. Clare (2013, 114); with certain tunes associated with particular dances. Although it is not possible to determine the breadth of Clare Island musician's repertoire in the 1950s, island dancers in 2017 maintain a preference for certain tunes. For example, in recent decades the jig "The Connaught man's Rambles" is the customary accompaniment for the first figure of the Clare Island half-set. These musical and structural "features of repetition and formal predictability" (Turino 2008, 44) allow for ease of learning and emphasise participation over presentational aesthetics.

Padraic described above how the young dancers at the 2017 Seisiún often require "a little bit more organisation" and "have to be cajoled a little bit more" to dance. In contrast, islanders recall the nights of set-dancing at house dances, and the parish hall, as events marked by excitement and an impulse to participate. This enthusiasm contrasts slightly with the limited displays of dancing at the Seisiún. While enthusiasm motivated dancing at house dances, adherence to form was still paramount. Chris explains how older islanders enforced order on the dance floor:

> The old fellas . . . they had such a love for dancing, and we used to go out on the floor, young fellas, and you'd be jig-acting a lot and you'd get a clip-in-the-ear if you were stepping out of line, as quick as anything else from them. You were not messing when you were on the floor.

Cyril makes a similar comment and notes that competition for floor space ensured that seasoned dancers controlled events: "Being a young fella you wouldn't get too much dancing in because all the old fellas would have the floor taken over". It is not clear what age group Cyril is referring to, but as Walsh described above "men of fifty" (1958, 319) were regulars on the dance floor.

Both Chris and Cyril explain how beginner dancers were given limited space to participate until they matured as dancers and as community members. Rebecca Sachs Norris suggests that the act of participating in dancing, as group activity, creates an embodied representation of community. She suggests that the act of group dancing not only represents community, but is a community in itself. Beginners must learn their role before being fully integrated to the space:

> Although beginners are welcomed in many folk dance venues, the experience of community comes from dancing together and being able to hold one's own. In many genres this also means being able to fill a place in the dance in order that the other dancers may fill theirs properly as well. Even the place that one holds in any given dance figure is not one's personal place but is a place that one fills temporarily. (Norris 2001, 119)

Chris and Cyril thus describe a process of learning to fill a space within the larger construct of community. Turino suggests that participatory performance treats music-making as a "social process and interaction, like a game, a ritual, or a conversation, than as an item or object" (2008, 87). From this perspective, the displays of dance in 2017 are reified cultural products that signal a more intricate form of community participation (and conversation) in the past.

In her final analysis, Walsh concludes that the stations—with dancing as a constituent part—were a key factor in maintaining community interaction on Clare Island (1958, 338). However, group dance may itself be the most significant factor, both as a means of maintaining community bonds and enculturating young islanders. Participation in group dancing remained the central function of station dances and house dances in general. Historian William H. McNeill (1995) develops a speculative but compelling argument that co-ordinated rhythmic movement (dance, marching, rhythmic work patterns) have performed a central role in human evolutionary and social history. McNeill posits that dance, as a participatory activity and shared emotional space, forms bonds that carry over into other areas of group cooperation (1995, 37). Ward's description of the social function of dance (outlined in Chapter Two) makes a similar claim to McNeill's. In his Scottish island example, Ward observes that dancing allows community members to see each other face-to-face as a real-time community. But community *céilidh* dancing also allowed individuals to evaluate each other's character and aptitudes (2015, 47).

McNeill suggests that the "euphoric response to keeping together in time" is the most powerful human tool in creating and sustaining community (1995, 150). With this perspective, it follows that small communities such as Clare Island include dance as a subconscious process in maintaining social bonds and presenting community to itself. This presentation, or performance of community, was in turn connected to the available performance space. While dance was a means of enacting community, the domestic space was the defining frame of these presentations.

Limitations of space

For much of the twentieth century there was a uniformity to island homes. As venues for music-making they offered similar performance dimensions. As suggested previously by Michael Barrett, the small indoor space of the island cottages limited the number of people that could participate at house dances. Mac Cárthaigh notes that the kitchen of homes on Clare Island remained "remarkably consistent" throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

> The examples surveyed (between 4.5 and 5m (15ft and 16ft 6in) long and on average 4m (13ft 6in) wide) vary only slightly from the modest to the more prosperous house. (Mac Cárthaigh 1999, 66)

Until the late 1980s most island houses—or cottages (McGarry 2017)—were "of the direct entry type, typical of northern, western and upland districts of Ireland" (Mac Cárthaigh 1999,

63) where one enters directly into the kitchen. The kitchen space of the island cottage was a central living-space within a three-roomed, rectangular structure (Gailey 1984, 140–163). Beginning in the 1970s, many homeowners on the island added a flat-roofed extension incorporating a dedicated kitchen and an indoor bathroom (Mac Cárthaigh 1999, 66).

Although from the 1970s onwards modern bungalows were built on Clare Island, the heyday of the stations and house dances was linked to a uniform cottage architecture. Alan Gailey speculates that the uniformity of vernacular architecture speaks to the role of these spaces within community life (1984, 221). These small buildings afforded little privacy and visitors entered directly to the family space. The structure of these cottages demonstrates "something of the relationship between the family and the community, and thereby speaks of the nature of the community itself" (Gailey 1984, 225).

At Clare Island house dances the kitchen size both defined the event and intensified the experience of participation. With a total usable floor space of approximately twenty square-metres, the half-set became both a practical and necessary choice of set-dance. Helen Brennan notes that throughout Ireland, the half-set often gained popularity wherever larger groupings were not possible (1999, 117). According to Cyril McCabe, the small size of the cottage kitchen added to the excitement of the evening. Dancers had to compete for the limited space and be serious in their intent:

> The house dances . . . the area was so small everybody would be mad to be on the floor. As soon as one half-set finished, the next one went straight out; you'd want to have everyone organised, you'd want to have your four people organised because the kitchens were so small.

Máirtín Moran observes that part of the enjoyment derived from playing within the confines of the dance and the confines of the performance spaces:

> In the house dances it would be, the most you'd get would be a full set: four couples. A lot of the time it might be just two because the kitchens weren't that big. Like, when you've a line of people sitting around [the kitchen] there wasn't that much room . . . The floor was never empty as they say. Like, you'd be queuing up. Let's say, if we were dancing there'd be two more waiting you know. You'd have to take a place in the queue . . . The floor was never empty . . . It was a great atmosphere. It was tough on the musicians though if there wasn't a few like to share [the playing]!

He notes that competition for limited space did not subtract from the enjoyment but added to the "great atmosphere" or what Ó Laoire describes as the warmth of "fellow feeling toward each other" (2005, 163). Music and musicians were also in limited supply and this added a

layer of uncertainty to the flow of these social occasions. The limitations and irregularities of the cottage setting ensured that every "dance" had a predictability but also a scarcity value.

The depiction of an island community dancing to traditional music in a cottage kitchen is replete with nationalist cultural imagery. This history and these practices are a source of the symbolic or heritage capital (Royle 2003) which is inscribed (or inferred) in the State support for island communities (as discussed in Chapter One). But each of these components—island community, cottage kitchens, and Irish traditional music—developed as a response to local needs and environment. Marion McGarry writes that the ideological imagery of the Irish cottage (including its kitchen) often overlooked its practical simplicity:

> Although it has accrued meanings and been appropriated, the true Irish cottage is apolitical and is instead based on geography and the social class of the occupant. It is a reaction to climate and local materials not religion. (2017, 97)

McGarry's quote refers specifically to the rural cottage but it can also be transcribed onto the discussion of the station dance. The stations existed beyond their religious function and represented the needs of the community and the limitations of the local environment. The station dance reflects the social, cultural and material resources available to islanders at a particular moment in Clare Island's history.

5. Changing community spaces and music-making practices

The 1935 Public Dance Halls Act had greatly impacted the use of domestic spaces and house dances in rural Ireland (Ní Fhuartháin, 2019; Ó hAllmhuráin, 2005; Porter, 2018). The Public Dance Halls Act was designed to limit dancing to licenced venues and in effect outlawed the use of the home as a space for public gathering and dancing. While the 1935 Act was not enforced consistently across Ireland (Porter 2018) it establishes a turning point in the shift of Irish social and community practices from domestic to public venues. Méabh Ní Fhuartháin (2019) chronicles the development of dance halls in Ireland during the twentieth century, both as a response to international trends and the Dance Halls Act.

Despite these regulatory changes, the completion of the Clare Island parish hall (circa 1944) owed more to events within the island than any concerted effort to adhere to legislation. An islander donated the basic cottage structure to the Church, with the express wish that it be made available for the island youth. The building was then completed as a small dance hall, managed by the island priest and operated by a local committee. Both Michael Barrett and Chris O'Grady were young teenagers during this period and recall the

details surrounding the opening. Chris highlights the interaction between Church, individual and community in the opening of the hall:

> [Islander] James O'Malley decided to build that house down there, and he had it built . . . and I think it was roofed, when he took ill and he died. He decided before he died that he would leave it to the church but that it had to be for the use of the island youth at the time . . . And that's how that place was built. Fr Jack Jennings finished it off then and it was opened as a little dance hall . . . I remember going back to that dance hall when I started going out at night and Jesus that place used to be packed!

Michael Barrett has a similar recollection but also notes the larger population of young people on the island in the 1940s. In his opinion, the hall fulfilled James O'Malley's wishes and provided a dedicated space for the island youth to gather on a weekly basis:

> There was a lot of young men in the island at the time and they all worked for free to build the hall. And it was a great thing for the island alright because the young people had nowhere to go. There used to be house dances alright, but the young people had nowhere to go. And, the dance was always on a Sunday night, so it was. And, there were some great dances you know when it . . . when it opened first.

From the 1940s until the 1960s the hall dances became a regular part of island social life and music-making. For much of this period they were held on Sunday nights throughout the year; this frequency contrasted with the bi-annual stations and the more irregular pattern of house dances.

Along with a regular timetable, the hall dances offered a number of structural advantages over the dances held in the cottage kitchens. The parish hall offered benefits in terms of it being a public (non-domestic) space and having a greater capacity than the typical cottage kitchen. As a single roomed structure—with interior dimensions of approximately ten-and-a-half metres by five metres—the hall provided approximately fifty-two square metres of total area (although slightly less useable space for dancing). This was over two-and-a-half times bigger than the total area offered by the cottage kitchen. Unlike the house dances, the hall was free of domestic associations and made no infringements upon a host family. Though welcomed, the stations were particularly intrusive and reorganised domestic space into a temporary centre for community. Islanders transformed the layout of their homes to accommodate the Mass, the meal, and the dancing. The music, noise and bustle of a station dance fully occupied what remained of the family private space. While less intrusive than stations, ordinary house dances also occupied the domestic space, both physically and acoustically. All dances required a reordering of the kitchen furniture and an opening up of

family space. In contrast, the hall provided a relatively large and single use space that was largely detached from other parts of daily life.

As a depersonalised space the hall lacked the individuality, uncertainty and subtle tensions which stimulated participation at the house dances. The hall dances continued into the 1960s, but already by the mid 1950s Walsh recorded a decline in its early popularity. She relates the opinions of some islanders who felt that the hall, without a host or a personal connection, was not as friendly or as welcoming place as the home (1958, 339). Additionally, some islanders were of the opinion that the regularity of hall dances "had minimised the need for house dances and as such resulted in their gradual decline" (1958, 340). As described above, islanders recall the constraints of kitchen size and limited opportunity as adding both excitement and warmth to house dances. Although still a relatively small structure, the hall represented a movement away from such positive constraints.

The opening of the Clare Island hall was in keeping with the national *Zeitgeist*, but there is no evidence that the 1935 Dance Hall Act directly impacted house dances on Clare Island. Ó Laoire reports that on Tory Island, Co. Donegal, the 1935 Act was not implemented due to the lack of law enforcement officers. Furthermore, "any attempt by the priest to interfere in dancing practice was firmly repulsed" by the island community (Ó Laoire 2005, 161). In the absence of enforcement, the needs of the island community overturned mainland decrees. Mainland communities were subject to both State law enforcement and vigilante Catholic clerics "who felt it was their moral duty to promulgate the Act among their congregations" (Ó hAllmhuráin 2005, 12).

It is not clear to what extent the island priests tried to suppress house dances on Clare Island during the 1940s and 1950s. There are a few anecdotal accounts of moral policing and Máirtín Moran recalls hearing stories from "before his time" of priests patrolling around houses at dances to catch "courting couples". The policing of the parish hall depended on the character of the local cleric and, as Ferriter notes, it was common for dissident or liberal priests to be sequestered in island parishes (2018,187–190). In addition to this, the Clare Island ministry rotated every three or four years. Therefore, the personality at the pulpit changed with such frequency that, in effect, no single policy existed regarding dances. Chris O'Grady remembers the first years of the opening of the parish hall and the efforts by the priest to control the space:

> [Fr Jennings would] close the hall every night at half-eleven . . . he'd give everybody a bit of a sermon before . . . "straight home now, no messing, no messing on the road" . . . And I remember coming over from the hall . . . at

night sometimes . . . innocent fun, just wandering along. And I remember on one or two occasions you'd be half way over and suddenly you'd have a search light coming from behind you, and the bold priest on his bicycle chasing over after everybody to make sure that there wasn't any of them linking [arms with] the women or anything like that.

Fr Jennings was replaced in 1946 by a new curate, and over the years different priests implemented varying levels of control. Cyril McCabe describes how the hall dances were defined by the presence of the priest:

Most of the time the priest would be there, or he'd be so close that there'd be nothing much going on anyway. But it was kind of a dance organised that there was no shenanigans going on at [anyway]. No courting, no nothing, because the priest would be there to keep an eye on things. What went on after they left the hall could be anybody guess!

Although the hall was a controlled space, Cyril suggests that this particular curate did not extend authority outside the building. Outside of the hall, and at other music-making occasions, there was a greater moral freedom.

The hall dances slowly declined and came to an end by the late 1960s. The building remained an important part of community life and, in effect, became a multifunction community centre. From the 1970s to the 1990s the hall was the main venue for dramatic productions, public meetings, indoor sports, and even viewing sports on television. Máirtín Moran remembers how in the 1960s the hall had multiple functions:

[It was used for] . . . meetings, plays, dances anything like that. Tommy Winters used to make currachs [small boats] in it in Winter time. They'd be fixing nets and stuff in it too, it was a general [space] . . . When the church was done up [1964], the first time . . . when Fr Curran was here [1963–67] he got the generator back there and he got a television for the hall . . . Lots of people used to go just to watch television, it was kind of like a cinema! A small television with poor reception . . . There'd be a big crowd maybe on a Sunday if there was a football match on.

The parish hall was in effect the predecessor of the Clare Island Community Centre and fulfilled the requirements of a community space up until 1990. In 2017 the physical structure remains central to community life as the location for O'Malley's Food store and the island's post office.

From the 1940s until the 1960s, dances in the parish hall presented an additional outlet for music-making and social life on Clare Island. Although its development is consistent with historical trends, the construction and use of the hall reflects the circumstances of island life. Similarly, the decline of the hall dances in the 1960s corresponds with changes in Irish social

life but ultimately resulted from the specific actions of islanders and the island community. From the mid-1960s onwards, McCabe's bar, and the newly opened Bay View Hotel, became new locations for music-making and community life.

The pub as community space

The 1960s were a period of significant economic growth and changes in Irish culture (Brown 2004; Ferriter 2005; Lee 1989) and brought new degrees of connection between island community and mainland living. In subsequent decades, a growth in tourism and consumerist values altered many of the self-sufficient activities surrounding community music-making and daily life. Pat Ewen first visited Clare Island in 1966 and recalls the curious impacts of these changes in Irish and islander perspectives:

> One of my abiding memories is of the early shop that was here . . . lots of tinned salmon and tinned fish on the shelves. You know to be selling tinned fish on an island with fish all around it! But people felt it was better in some way, intrinsically better to have it out of a tin. And that's no criticism of Clare Island, it is universal we all do it. We all must buy the modern thing because we think the old thing must be worse.

Despite increasing material changes, island music-making remained largely self-sufficient into the 1980s as local musicians performed for a local audience in spaces controlled by the local community. Up until the 1990s Irish traditional music maintained a central role in integrating community through movement and dance.

As outlined in Chapter Two, the island community experienced a steady population decrease between the 1940s and the 1960s. Michael Barrett proposes that a reduction in the young population led to the decline of the hall dances. But this was only one factor, and he outlines several social changes emerging on Clare Island in the 1960s:

> Sure the population went down so there was never, no young people hardly . . . There weren't that many dances in the hall later . . . there were some but, when the hotel opened [1964] it was something new. And, you see the girls never went to McCabe's [bar]. Oh never, oh if a girl was seen in McCabe's pub it would be a crime you know at that time. Girls weren't supposed to go to pubs . . . it was awful wasn't it? It was just in the times. But when the hotel opened then the girls, they started going to the hotel alright. And, I don't know what was the difference, like you know. Then it all sort of changed. They lost interest in the hall then I think.

Beginning in the 1960s, the public house became a more acceptable venue for a wider segment of society and a buoyant Irish economy led to an increase in alcohol consumption during the decade (Ferriter 2015, 362). Irish social life and traditional music-making shifted

into this commercial space (Hall 1999; Share 2003). In 1964 a new hotel opened on Clare Island and, alongside McCabe's bar, islanders had the choice of two licenced premises. From the 1960s onward, these venues offered islanders increased opportunities to consume alcohol and socialise with tourists.

Both the Bay View Hotel and McCabe's bar also offered an independently managed space for entertainment, unhampered by either Church or domestic life. Munnelly observes that the shift from the domestic space to the pub offered greater freedoms in the surrounding social interactions of music-making:

> Generally, when people gathered in rural pubs, apart from the ready availability of alcohol, the main difference was the loss of the element of 'control' buttressed by custom in the céilí-ing houses of old. While the publican was the boss, he did not govern the people who assembled under his roof in the same way as the man or the woman of the house might have done. (2001, 198)

Although the island house dances were ostensibly a democratic space, they were subject to the personality and inclinations of the homeowner.

Prior to the 1960s, McCabe's bar had limited floor space for dancing. Cyril McCabe notes that the size of the space, along with the absence of women in the pub meant that music or dance were not considered as barroom activities. Up until this time, the pub had a limited social function:

> It was a very small area, so you didn't have dancing, you didn't have room for dancing, you didn't need music. People sat up on the counter, there were no stools! If anyone wanted to sit, they swung themselves up on the counter.

The small area of the pub reflected the small number of customers and a lack of disposable income in the community:

> You didn't have people . . . people would come down at Christmas and wool day, and that was their only outing. They weren't out on a regular basis; they'd no money.

Former publican Bernard McCabe recalls the gradual change over a period of years as music-making moved from the house dances—and the hall—to the pub. He altered the structure of the bar space in the 1970s to accommodate new demands for music and dance:

> It must be well into the sixties I think before there was much music in the pub . . . [Before that] you might get an odd day there'd be someone in that would play some tunes . . . It must have been in the early seventies I put in a dance floor in the bar . . . the first one that went in. And [later] I set up a disco . . . I think it was the seventies . . . I set up a disco, lights and

> everything . . . People wanted to go dancing, and someplace to [socialise with music] . . . there used to be a lot of dancing for a while in the bar.

As a private business owner, Bernard could respond with relative ease to the needs of customers and changing trends in music-making practices. In this regard, the pub characterised a greater social flexibility than the communally owned parish hall, or the domestically focused cottage kitchens. Bernard's comments also suggest that the pub was a site for introducing new technology to island music-making. The pub setting introduced amplification, electronic instruments and even stage lighting as performance tools. By 2017, this technology was a central component in most musical performances on Clare Island.

Electrification and entertainment

As described in Chapter One, Clare Island was decades behind the rural national electrification project. The opening of the Clare Island electricity station in 1983 quickly transformed domestic spaces giving islanders full access to modern appliances and conveniences. Arguably the most significant social and cultural change occurred with an increase in television usage. Robert Savage notes the role of television in undermining the hegemony of the local in Irish life:

> By enabling Irish society to have direct access to news, information and popular culture and bypassing traditional intermediaries, including the Church and the local and national press, television helped quicken the pace of modernisation that began when Séan Lemass became Taoiseach. (2010, 1)

Due to the inconsistencies of battery powered sets, television was not ubiquitous in Clare Island homes until after 1983. With a reliable and constant source of electricity, islanders were quick to adopt new entertainment technology. By the 1990s satellite dishes, VHS recorders and compact disc players dominated the acoustic space of island kitchens and living rooms.

From the 1980s onwards, islanders had increasing opportunities to entertain themselves in isolation. Ó Laoire describes a similar effect on Tory island and observes that for islanders the "presence of television means that ready-made entertainment is easily accessible and that there is less need to go out in search of diversion" (2005, 13). This experience is recorded elsewhere in rural Ireland as community activity gave way to individual media consumption. In rural Co. Donegal, Taylor quotes local opinion that television damaged face-to-face interactions and "killed the conversation" (1995, 15). Peace

summarises a more cynical assessment of the effects of television perceived by villagers in Co. Clare:

> Not only does television keep people in the confines of the home, but it is also considered to subject them to the same mind-numbing process of cultural conformity. (2001, 108)

In a curious twist, the home was once again the primary space for diversion and entertainment, albeit in an entirely private capacity.

Islanders regularly cite media and technology as a factor in the decline of self-sufficient forms of entertainment such as visiting and house dances. Ciara Cullen moved to Clare Island in 1982 and witnessed the impact of electrification in 1983. She recalls how islanders at that time registered the negative impact of television on social life and its effect on conversation:

> I think the biggest change at that time was the television. Because I heard people say it, old people say it to me . . . And I remember being down at the pier—I'll say it was like the next day, but it certainly was very quickly—after the electricity was turned on and you'd see these big colour TV's being brought in [to the island]. And, I remember a number of people, and in this case it would have been women as well as men, saying; "oh this is [bad] nobody is talking anymore" . . . you know, people did have these little televisions [before this] but it was the attitude towards them that changed because you could keep it on then, you didn't care.

Electrification allowed the scarcity and luxury of television to become a staple of domestic entertainment. Mary McCabe moved to Clare Island in 1975 and also noted changes occurring after 1983 with the widespread use of television in everyday life. Alongside a decline in social interactions she recalls a change in the quality of the encounters amongst islanders:

> From then on people had televisions and they became kind of obsessed with their televisions and they mightn't even [socialise] as often. But [before the ubiquity of television] the kind of conversations were almost more *pure*. When I say pure, I mean more interesting and it wasn't just something they had heard on the television, you know. It would be something very often that they had read in books, or that their father before them had told them. It just seemed to be a more . . . a different type of conversation [beforehand].

Mary's recollection of change reflects the undermining of the "traditional intermediaries" proposed by Savage (2010, 1) and the increase of outside influence in daily life.

Padraic O'Malley considers an increase in television usage and a decline in dancing as part of a shift in dominant forms of entertainment. He suggests that the impetus for dancing arose from a lack of other diversions. Dancing declined as newer options became available:

> When you went to a dance . . . well that's what they were, dances! To keep the night going you needed dancers . . . Ok, you got food [at the stations] but drink really wasn't a factor in it. So, the only thing to do at the party was to dance you know . . . When the stations died out then, the station dances died out. People were going to the pub probably more often, to other entertainment and ahem to other things. Also, I suppose people had electricity in the eighties, everybody had televisions then maybe they spent more time at home.

The further dislocation from the local offered by the internet may represent another, subtler, form of distraction and decline for island social interaction. However, each innovation represents both an opportunity and an obstacle for island communities who rely on a connection to the outside world for their survival.

Conclusion

As a concert series, the CCÉ Seisiún was arguably a highlight of music-making on Clare Island in 2017. Extending over the high-season months of July and August, the Seisiún was one of the consistent events in community music-making.

Through the audience, the performers and the performance space the Seisiún illustrates the connections between island community and the outside world in 2017. Audiences at the Seisiún present an extended music-making community assembled from locals, visitors and tourists. Although locals contribute a core portion of performances, most of the paid guest musicians at the Seisiún are from the mainland. As a performance space, the Community Centre bar represents the addition of State resources into the local community from the 1990s onwards. On Seisiún Tuesdays, this performance space is further shaped by codes of behaviour and structures derived from the cultural institution of CCÉ. While these outside factors are noteworthy, the event relies on the motivation and input of locals. The CCÉ Seisiún at the Community Centre bar shows community participation in island cultural life in 2017. It represents group effort and the willingness of community members to offer time, resources, and skills in the support of cultural life. Although the Granuaile branch and the Seisiún format existed previously, it is only in 2009 that locals adopted the Seisiún to community needs.

The Seisiún is also an example of changes and continuities in island life. The Seisiún connects to the older forms of island music-making at the house, station and parish hall dances of the 1950s and 1960s. The station dance epitomised this form of music-making and provided a structured occasion for group participation, socialisation and bonding. The station dance and the CCE Seisiún are parallel social institutions in island music-making and are part of a continuity in island cultural life. Both support and frame similar musical genre, performance etiquette, intergenerational setting and socialisation opportunities. The nine Seisiún nights in 2017 (with a similar number between 2009–2019) produced a cyclical pattern of music-making mirroring the biannual stations periods during the 1950s (Walsh 1958, 138).

Between Walsh's fieldwork in 1957 and 2017, music-making on Clare Island shifted from a self-sufficient to a professional activity. Overall, participatory performance transferred from the cottage kitchen to the public house and involved a regular tourist audience. Between 1957 and 2017, the social meaning of dance also altered. In the 1950s, dancing provided both the main form of entertainment and social bonding (McNeil 1995) for islanders. Dance is no longer the primary form of diversion for islanders but is instead one of several entertainments available. While the role of dancing has changed, the Seisiún presents the continuing role of participatory performance in sustaining community life or vitality. Comparable to the stations, the Seisiún provides a structured opportunity for participatory music-making (Turino 2008) and the experience of social bonding or "fellow feeling" (Ó Laoire, 2005, 163). From the perspective of Irish cultural practices, the CCÉ Seisiún is an example of what Lauri Honko designates as the second life of traditional practices (1991) or what Diarmuid Ó Giolláin defines as the process of retraditionalisation (2005). The Seisiún on Clare Island can be interpreted as a reframing or repurposing of older music-making practices separate from their original (traditional) function. This is true insomuch that features of island music-making in the past are reframed through the setting of the Seisiún, the Community Centre bar, and the audience in 2017. Music-making at a station dance in the 1950s occurred under other circumstances, in a different venue, and with local musicians performing for a local audience. But the Seisiún also presents a continuity of music-making and social practice. At a fundamental level, older islanders embody this experience and bridge the gap between the present and the past. There is also a continuity in musical practice as customs (such as the Clare Island half-set) continue into the present. The Seisiún symbolises a step in an ongoing series of adaptations in social life and music-making on the island. Dancing a half-set at a station dance in the 1950s was also part of this process of adaptation. House dances and

stations took place in a social landscape altered by the CDB (Feehan 2019) and in cottages improved with CDB grant aid (Mac Cárthaigh 1991). The Clare Island half-set is a product of the nineteenth century fashions of Irish and international dance (Breathnach 1996 [1971]; Ní Bhriain 2008). The accordion—the most popular instrument at island station dances—was also a recent addition, adapted to island and mainland Irish music-making (Ní Chaoimh 2013). The decline in island population (from 378 in the 1926 census to 167 in 1966) indicates another level of adaptation in island music-making and community life. A smaller population not only suggests smaller pool of participants but also a more direct experience of community. Music-making in a smaller community increased the possibility of bonding and generating what Dunbar suggests as a "genuinely social relationship" (1996, 77) ("Dunbar's Number" is discussed in Chapter Two). There was also a subtle adaptation or reworking of island identity during the twentieth century; Clare Island shifted from being an example of progress under the CDB to an English speaking outlier under the Irish Free State. Change occurred again in the 1990s as islanders were re-imaged by State apparatus and rebranded as an integral part of State heritage in the twenty-first century. Against this backdrop of adaptation and change, participatory performance goals remained central to social life and the experience of islandness on Clare island. Therefore, throughout the twentieth century, music-making was both an important part of community aliveness and a measure of island vitality.

Tourist entertainment and popular music represent the most recent phase of change and adaptation in island music-making. Chapter Four continues the analysis of Clare Island music-making in 2017, examining the interactions between tourism, popular music and private enterprise at the Sailor's Bar. Chapter Four also highlights the role of individual actors, and actions, in sustaining island music-making and community vitality over the last fifty years.

Chapter Four
The Sailor's Bar: Tourism, Entertainment and Enterprise

Introduction

While the CCÉ Seisiún reveals community motivation and a connection to traditional forms, it was a small part of summer music-making in 2017. Of the fifty-six music events surveyed in the 2017 high-season (presented in Chapter Two), twenty were Irish traditional music and thirty-six featured performances of popular music genres. These figures show that popular music genres accounted for 64% of high-season bookings. Although several popular groups incorporated traditional music during their performances, the presentational staging of these events separated them from the open format of the Seisiún. During this summer high-season, only fifteen (out of the twenty) traditional music performances were open music sessions. The remaining five presented amplified traditional music in a presentational, or band, format. Overall, in summer 2017, tourism and popular music dominated social activity on Clare Island.

Chapter Four focuses on the tourist enterprise of the Sailor's Bar as a site for examining the role of popular culture and tourism in island music-making in the twenty-first century. The influence of tourism and popular music reflects both the needs of private enterprise on the island and changes in community since the 1960s. Music-making at the Sailor's Bar illustrates connections between local community, regional trends and wider cultural flows. The example of the Sailor's Bar also demonstrates the role of individual action in sustaining island music-making and cultural life.

1. Performance space at the Sailor's Bar 2017

The combined businesses of the Sailor's Bar and Restaurant (hereafter Sailor's Bar) and the Go Explore Hostel are located on the south-eastern shore of Clare Island. This multifunction structure sits overlooking the harbour and out across the mouth of Clew Bay (refer to Figure 4 below). The site is picturesque and ideally located for a tourist business, with extensive views; from Corraun in the north, Croagh Patrick to the east, and the mountains of Connemara, Co. Galway to the South.

Figure 4: Exterior of the Sailor's Bar. The bar is located on the ground floor, in the front right-hand portion of the building.

The Sailor's Bar functions as an architectural storyline of social change on Clare Island since the late 1800s. The core building is a nineteenth century landlord's house attributed to the estate of the O'Donnell family (Crosby 2004, 187). Following the acquisition of the island by the CDB, the house was repurposed several times. Between 1895 and 1960 it was the site of a lace school, a constabulary barracks, and a holiday home. Circa 1961, Chris O'Grady purchased the building and developed it into the Bay View Hotel, which opened in 1964. In 2011, Chris's youngest son Carl redeveloped this existing business as a bar and restaurant with separate hostel accommodation. This new tourism business was officially launched in June 2012 by the Minister of State for Tourism and Sport (and Co. Mayo TD) Michael Ring.

The structure surrounding the Sailor's Bar is part of the island landscape for nearly 150 years and remains one of the focal points in community life. While the site was reconfigured and rebranded in 2012, it is still recognisable as the Bay View Hotel. Many elements of the

original building remain, including the landlord era chimney stacks and hipped roof (both are visible in Figure 4). Despite recent name changes, local memory moves slower than branding. Many islanders and long term visitors continue to refer to the bar area as "the hotel", with one "going up to the hotel" rather than to the Sailor's Bar. This recalls a similar practice in the 1980s and 1990s, when older islanders referred to the then Bay View Hotel as "the barracks" referencing the earlier constabulary function of the building.

The structure of the Sailor's Bar in 2017 suggests the changing demands of tourism and hospitality on Clare Island since the 1960s. A modern flat roof section extends to the front of the original building. This section includes large windows offering restaurant diners and hostel guests panoramic views across Clew Bay. Developments in the structural layout of the bar area also expresses changes in the role of music and entertainment in island based tourism.
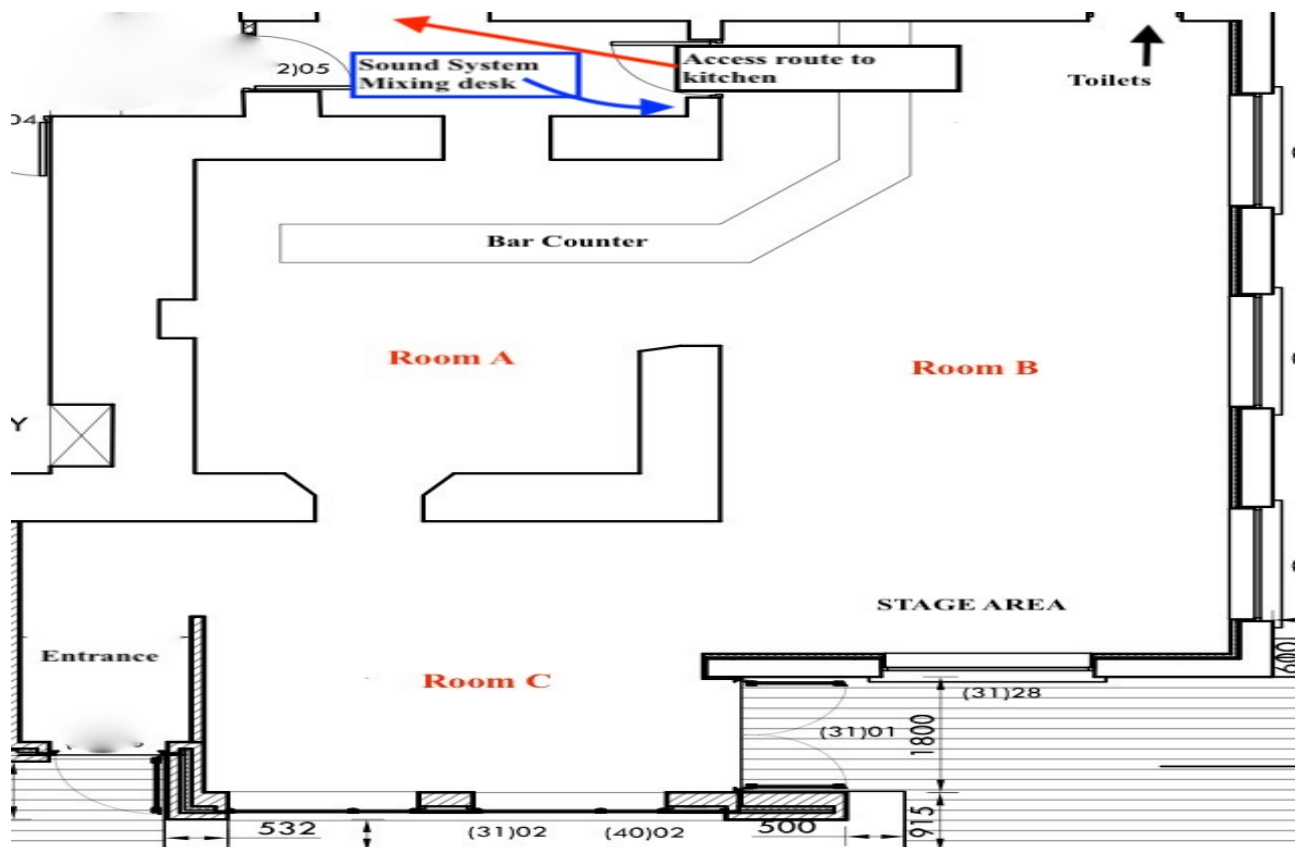

Figure 5: Annotated floor plan of the Sailor's Bar interior. (Original image courtesy of Carl O'Grady)

In this ethnographic account, the bar and restaurant feature as the main functions of the building. While the hostel is an important part of the business, it is reserved for paying guests and closed to the island public. The barroom is the focal point of music-making and of community social interactions within the structure. The Sailor's Bar is in essence a single

room, but the entire floor area divides into three subsections. For descriptive purposes, I will label these sections as room A, B and C (see Figure 5 above).The total floor area of the Sailor's Bar is approximately eighty square metres. Room C is roughly sixteen square metres, Room A is between ten and fifteen square metres, and Room B is upwards of fifty square metres in floor area.

The Sailor's is essentially a semi rectangular room with an L-shaped partition wall subdividing both the physical and the functional aspects. This room configuration developed as various architectural extensions encased the original building. The innermost section (Room A) is part of the nineteenth century landlord's house and was the original bar space for the Bay View Hotel. Between the 1960s and 1980s, subsequent extensions (onto the exterior of the north gable), Room B, expanded this bar and created an additional room for dancing and music-making. In 2011, a large extension onto the front of the building (to the South) created Room C. This new space connected both the existing rooms and formed the present floor plan.

Room A—the aforementioned Bay View Hotel bar—is the smallest room. This space presents a direct physical link with the past as it remains essentially unchanged for a generation or longer. The size of Room A regulates its use as a performance space; the area is too small to accommodate bands and too confined for amplified sound. Overall, Room A is the main space for socialising within the bar and remains in use even during the quietest periods. Its size makes it easy to create a convivial atmosphere with people standing, or sitting, in tightknit groups. On busy nights it becomes a snug, partially separated from the noise of the main performance area and restaurant traffic. Room A connects directly to Room B through a bottleneck space between the bar counter and the inner dividing wall.

Room B developed as an extension to the original bar and expanded in several phases. By the 1990s, Room B was the main area for music-making and live bands. Musicians perform at one end of the room, opposite the counter space and with their backs to exterior windows. A wooden dance floor covers approximately four-fifths of this rectangular room and a small tiled section demarcates the stage area. Room C was constructed as part of the 2011 extension (to the South) and merged the two existing rooms into one large room. This extra floor space provides table seating for over twenty people and offers diners unrestricted views over Clew Bay.

Stage area

Musical performances at the Sailor's Bar take place at the stage area in Room B. Although informal or unamplified music sessions are not bound to this floor space, most music-making in 2017 occurred in this part of the bar. The stage area describes a loosely defined section of the room reserved for musical performances. Until 2011, this was—similar to the musician's corner in the Community Centre bar—the most convenient and out-of-the-way area for bands to set up their equipment.

With the opening of the Sailor's Bar in 2012, the business model required a more formal designation of performance space or stage area. In 2013, Carl O'Grady installed an amplification and lighting system to facilitate performances and further delineate performance space. At the stage area, a wall mounted multicore box provides XLR connection points for microphones, and a set of ceiling mounted multicolour stage lights illuminate the musicians. The sound system, or P.A.[11], includes wall mounted speakers dispersed throughout the room, with a power amplifier and a mixing desk positioned behind the bar (mixing desk location is labelled in Figure 5 above). Alongside maximising floor space, this setup provided the additional benefit of allowing the bar tender to control volume levels both for pre-recorded music and live performance. Through this setup, management can also intervene if volume levels disturb the hostel guests sleeping in the other parts of the building. The business website lists the technical specifications of the sound system alongside recommendations for visiting bands:

> Where possible we ask that you use the in-house system as much as possible to avoid transportation of equipment on boats etc.
> Please make sure that your equipment is well packaged to prevent damage during transportation.[12]

It is interesting to note the island specific aspects of this information and the related practical advantages of providing in-house amplification.

Beginning in 2012, the new bar/restaurant services required a structured use of floor space—particularly on weekends when dining space is at a premium. During the day time, and on nights without performances, the stage area accommodates dining tables. Typically, the restaurant service ends before night time music-making. But, the stage area can also be reconfigured with minimal disturbance to customers seated in other parts of Room B, or in

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[11] P.A. (abbreviation of Public Address System) is a term commonly used by performers to describe any sound amplification system. This can be a fixed or portable system.
[12] "bands information," n.d. Go Explore hostel, accessed June 11, 2019.
https://www.goexplorehostel.ie/bar/bands-information/

the adjoining space of Room C. Overall, the stage area presents as an out-of-the-way, yet visible corner of an otherwise highly trafficked restaurant and bar space. The designated stage area reflects both business and performance requirements at the Sailor's Bar. Additionally, the stage area retains performance patterns from the Bay View Hotel and reflects limitations imposed by the layout of the older structure.

The limitations of this stage setup reveal music-making as part of a wider sphere of social and business requirements interacting at the Sailor's Bar. The bar/restaurant business model allowed musicians little time to test or figure out the in-house P.A. On busy nights, the stage area was inaccessible until towards the end of restaurant service at around 9pm. Also by the time staff reorganised the stage area and musicians set up their equipment, the bar was often loud with conversation and revelry. This noise became an additional sonic obstacle to sound checking the house P.A. system. Although designed to make stage setup more convenient for musicians, this P.A. was often a source of complication and distraction for performers in 2017. Some bands avoided these issues by bringing their own P.A. to the island, but in doing so swapped inconveniences of performance for ones of transport.

The distance from the stage area to the mixing desk—located behind the bar so that staff could control volume—presented an obstacle to responsive adjustments of volume or audio equalisation. This was most apparent on occasions when microphone feedback caused customers to cover their ears and sent a flustered musician, or bar person, rushing towards the mixing desk. On busy nights when customers filled the floor space in Room B, it took longer to traverse this ten metre distance. The intricacy of the sound system added a further layer of complications. In my observations during 2017, few of the Sailor's staff understood the workings of the system beyond operating the volume controls for piped music. Added to this lack of local knowledge was a confusing array of routings for the different sections of the system and a relatively complex sixteen-channel mixing desk that exceeded the needs of the performance space.

As the newest part of the bar, Room C connects the two older rooms but also added another layer of inconvenience to performances. Musicians face their main audience positioned in Room B and dancing takes place in the area directly in front of the band. Room C is stage left and customers seated in this area look sideways into the performance space. This layout skews the sound levels as the instrumentation and speakers project into the main area of room B. On busy nights, a steady flow of people moves through this space to access a doorway leading from Room C to the outside deck and smoking area. There is often a circular flow of pedestrian traffic as customers and staff move from the main entrance at the

front dining area (Room C), through to the inner bar (Room A), to the toilets (end of Room B), to the performance space (Room B) and often returning through the front dining area (Room C) on their return journey to the inner bar (Room A). This pattern diminishes or increases depending on how busy the evening becomes, but the stage area often overlaps this thoroughfare.

While music-making is allocated an important position at the Sailor's Bar the complications of technology, room layout, and business needs detract somewhat from the utility of the stage area. Rather than creating a distinct space for "presentational performance" (Turino 2008) the stage area acts as a compromise between multiple needs. While it provides the physical space necessary for bands, it also inadvertently reduces the separation between ideas of on-stage and off-stage. Instead, the stage area embeds musicians within the milieu of the bar and restaurant, making them participants within the social interactions as much as standalone performers.

2. Tourism, entertainment and music-making

As a tourist enterprise, the Sailor's Bar invests considerably in music as entertainment. From 2012 onwards the calendar of live music at this island venue expanded, going from occasional bookings in the previous decade (at the Bay View Hotel) to three nights every week during July and August. By summer 2017, tourist entertainment was the dominant stimulus for music-making on Clare Island. Consequently, tourism provides both economic and cultural opportunities for the island community.

There is a direct narrative link between the development of the Sailor's Bar in 2012 to the opening of the Bay View Hotel in 1964 and the development of tourism in Clew Bay during the 1950s. Clew Bay and its islands have attracted discerning visitors to west Mayo since the nineteenth century. In *The Irish Sketchbook of 1842* William Thackeray describes Clew Bay in superlative terms as being the most beautiful view he ever saw (1990 [1843], 298). Tourists have visited Clare Island since at least the mid-nineteenth century. An advertisement from 1851 lists tourist accommodation for rent on the island:

> To be let. Two lodges, comfortably fitted up for the reception of families. The situation is extremely agreeable, and in the neighbourhood, is a very fine strand, ensuring at all times, safe Bathing ground; whilst the varied and imposing scenery in the vicinity, affords a rich treat to visitors. A boat leaves the island weekly, for Westport, and conveys back to the island (safely) any necessaries, or other commands

required by parties resident thereon. Every attention will be paid to those who will make the island their residence during the bathing season, by the proprietor John Ferres. (Ferres 1851)

Little is known about John Ferres or his two lodges, but the themes of leisure activity, scenery appreciation, ferry transport and seasonality remain central to island tourism up to the present. However, these early tourists had little impact on the wider community, and one hundred years after Ferres's advertisement tourism was still a minor addition to island life.

Walsh describes Clare Islanders in the 1950s as being "indifferent to tourists" (1958, 95) and uninterested in tourist enterprise. In Quinn's 1966 documentary, islander Johnny "Lecarrow" O'Malley offered his views of tourism. Although he was one of the island craftsmen involved in building the Bay View Hotel (1962–64) he could see no indirect benefits from tourism for the wider community:

> Tourism won't help the island at all, no help in the world to any of the people living in the cottages on the island. I could see no help at all from tourists. They just come and go and it's nice to meet them and see them but that's about all, there's no help. (Quinn 1966)

Later in the same documentary Michael Joe O'Malley offers a similar perspective and highlights again the limited impact—or perceived limited financial benefit—of tourism on the island:

> There's been no financial benefit to, I would say, 45 out of the 50 families that's here. Tourism in general, I'm sort of suspicious about it. (Quinn 1966)

The irony of these statements is that in 1966 the community was experiencing changes in island economy and social life, both directly and indirectly, through tourism.

By the 1950s, the development of sea angling tourism from Westport increased the opportunities for tourist enterprises. In this economic backdrop, Clew Bay and Clare Island emerged as a resource with economic potential. Writing in 1957, *Irish Times* columnist Colm Kelly speculated that Clew Bay would become an important focus for tourism in Ireland. He suggests that recent events indicated a growing tourist potential:

> Achill Island, on the north side of the famous horse-shoe bay, has already held a 'come and see us' exhibition in Dublin, Westport has announced a shark-fishing contest, and now there is a possibility that all the little resorts and towns around the bay may get together to sell the sixty miles of coastline as one holiday playground. (Kelly 1957)

He ends the piece with the suggestion that private enterprise or development associations needed to exploit this potential. Böll (2011 [1957]) notes the air of pessimism associated with County Mayo up to this point, but Kelly's opinion piece echoes a rising confidence in the region's potential. Local entrepreneurs around Clew Bay began to connect with this new wave of optimism and the tourism market. In 1961, journalist Christopher Moriarty observed the growth of the tourist industry on Achill Island. He remarks on the increase of tourist accommodation and notes the development of smaller business ventures:

> All over now guest-houses and hotels are appearing. The pubs are being improved, an enterprising artist has opened a shop for selling coffee and his pottery work, while another resident works the hand loom for the tourist market. (Moriarty 1961)

In this same year (1961) Chris O'Grady set out to capitalise on this growing tourism potential. While many of his peers emigrated from Clare Island in the 1950s, Chris remained due to family commitments. He felt compelled to make the most of his situation and develop whatever business opportunity he could within the confines of the island:

> I was anxious to get away. I just wanted to get away, and it just wasn't my lot, I had to stay at home. And I decided that when I had to stay at home that I'd have to try and do something.

Amidst an atmosphere of economic stagnation and emigration (both on Clare Island and in the wider region) Chris opened the Bay View Hotel in 1964. His story—and that of other tourism entrepreneurs—offers a counterpoint to the perceived narrative of decline in the West of Ireland during this period (Healy 1968). In the early 1960s, establishing a business on an island, or anywhere in Co. Mayo, required self-determination and a willingness to choose a narrative of progress over one of decline.

The development of the Bay View Hotel arose from a convergence of personal motivation, opportunity, and regional tourism green shoots. The availability of the former landlord's house and its location at the harbour provided an important starting point in the construction of the hotel. Chris cites the development of sea angling tourism in Clew Bay as another important factor:

> I was doing a lot of sea angling in Westport, when the sea angling started in Westport in the late fifties or early sixties. I was bringing people out [fishing] every other day and I was bringing them in here to the island . . . and they were wondering why there wasn't accommodation on the island. They were constantly asking me about accommodation on the island: "Why isn't there accommodation on the island? ye have such an abundance of fish here, you've only to go outside the harbour and you get fish".

Chris responded to this opportunity and demand with the idea to build tourist accommodation. His business ambitions were further strengthened by a social circle that included tourism entrepreneurs in the wider Clew Bay region:

> I was in contact with a very good of mine from Westport who owned the Railway Hotel, John Jeffers, and John had a lot of clients coming from France. They were coming the whole year around . . . Instead of them having to come all the way by boat to Clare Island to start fishing, they would much prefer to stay on the island. So that's how it started, that's how I ended up opening the hotel.

While Chris O'Grady was the key component in the business's actualisation, it is impossible to disconnect the development of the Bay View Hotel from the climate of economic growth in the 1960s (Gibbons 1996, 82–83) and the developments in regional and national tourism (Furlong 2009).

The Bay View Hotel connected into the development of tourism in the Clew Bay area, and local newspapers marked the occasion of its opening. In 1964, the *Mayo News* delivered front page coverage of court proceedings for the granting of a spirit licence alongside details of the hotel's facilities:

> The building [is] a two storey structure with part slate and part flat roof. The ground floor comprised of a sun lounge and main entrance hall, a general lounge and residents lounge, toilets, kitchen, dining room, store and two staff bedrooms. On the first floor there were twelve bedrooms, two of which were staff quarters. All bedrooms had hot and cold water. The water supply came from a spring and was pumped to a storage tank by an electric pump. ("Licence Granted for new Clare Island Hotel," *Mayo* News, July 25, 1964)

The Bay View Hotel was one of the few infrastructural developments of any kind on the island during the mid-twentieth century. Such was the lack of basic amenities on the off-shore islands—perhaps in rural Ireland as a whole—that one journalist noted both hot water and electricity as examples of the hotel being "very modern" ("Clare Island Hotel gets Licence," *Western People*, July 18, 1964). Another short article describes the Bay View as a "luxury hotel" ("Luxury Hotel on Clare Island," *Connaught Telegraph*, May 23, 1964). The provision of running water and a private generator power supply was a major development for a Clare Island hotel; it took a further twenty years before most island households received mains water or electricity supply. The opening of this hotel in 1964 marks the beginning of modern tourism on Clare Island and is emblematic of a new era of modernisation in island life. As with other modernisations (described in Chapter Three), the island setting often

staggered or delayed the pace of change. Nevertheless, from the mid-1960s onwards tourism increasingly shaped island music-making practices.

The Bay View Hotel also contributed to a new level of confidence in island life, both for islanders and non-islanders. Dubliner Pat Ewen recalls how during his initial visits to Clare Island in the mid-1960s, the Bay View Hotel was a symbol of community vitality. In his opinion, the hotel countered other "downward" changes on the island:

> I was glad to see [the Bay View Hotel] because it indicated life on the island . . . The lighthouse had just closed, so that was another downward thing . . . people were emigrating. There was no employment here. There were no boats here . . . there was nothing moored out in the bay at all. There was the ferry and one or two others, that was it. So there was a downward feel, that's why I say it was a pessimistic atmosphere. So, to open the hotel was definitely a very brave move.

It is also worth noting Pat's equation of boats with notions of island sustainability or lack thereof.

Along with providing new opportunities for seasonal employment, the hotel bolstered the perception of a healthy future. In an era of island depopulation and the evacuation of islands around the Irish coast, the Bay View Hotel was a symbol of confidence. For islanders, the Bay View Hotel also represented a new level of worldliness. Raphaelle McCabe recalls the impression created by this new addition to the island landscape: "the hotel was like the Gresham". The Bay View Hotel was a metaphor for sophistication, comparable to the fanciest hotels in Dublin.

The facilities offered at the Bay View (as outlined in the newspaper articles above) were a major leap forward in services available for both tourists and the island community. Along with providing a new space for social gatherings and music-making, the hotel signalled cultural modernisation; this included the installation of the first television set on the island ("Television," *Mayo News*, March 28, 1964). The hotel also offered modern conveniences for ceremonial events and social gatherings such as weddings, receptions and meetings. Prior to this, island gatherings were limited by the size and possibilities offered by cottage kitchens, the bar space at McCabe's, or the rudimentary parish hall. This new tourism business also created a setting for the development of leisure pursuits on the island. Chris organised activities as part of the guest package and to entice customers to his island location. A newspaper advertisement, from *The Times* (London) in 1968, boasts a range of guest activities at the Bay View Hotel and suggests a tranquil island setting:

Fine fishing, but you don't HAVE to fish! Clare Island's fun for all the family - beaches, pony trekking, donkeys, boat trips, mountains, lobsters, leprechauns, and 30ft fishing Diesels (holding 6), & c. Plus comfortable first-class family Hotel. Weekly £11; July/August 250/-. ("Bay View Hotel," *The Times*, March 23, 1968)

Declan and Fionnuala Scott from Co. Cork recall the communal atmosphere of staying at the Bay View Hotel during the 1960s and 1970s with group excursions, meals and entertainments (Field Notes, 6 May 2019).

Many hotel guests, such as the Scott family, returned every year for their summer holidays and developed lifelong associations to Clare Island. Islands and other rural holiday destinations attract "utterly devoted" visitors (Kruger 1994, 11) who return year after year, becoming well acquainted with the people and place but have little interaction beyond holiday associations (Kohn 1997, 18). These are the archetypal visitors (Kaul 2009, 80), described in Chapter Two, who add to the creation of Gill's island "Public 3" (1994, 279). Tourism, or tourist infrastructure, is an important route for bringing new people to Clare Island; some of whom move along the spectrum from tourist, to visitor, to blow in.

"People want to be entertained": music and tourism in 2017

Since 2012, the Sailor's Bar has scheduled a full calendar of music bookings during the summer. Most weekends from the start of June to the end of September include live music performance. In 2017, the high-season weeks of July and August featured a minimum of three nights of music-making. Similar to music-making at the Community Centre bar, performances at the Sailor's Bar varied according to the particular musicians, the audience temperament, the proximity to other calendar events, and even the weather. Tourist numbers and audience size increased during periods of heatwave and decreased during weeks of inclement weather. Proprietor Carl O'Grady considers music to be an important entertainment resource and a tool for attracting customers to the island:

> I always knew it [music and entertainment] was going to be a big part because . . . people, I believe, are driven to book a stay anywhere by a number of factors, and one of them would be "what's on?" People want to be entertained.

Carl considers live music, performed by entertaining bands, as a crucial element in creating the atmosphere of an evening at the Sailor's Bar, and enhancing the experience of being on Clare Island. Music, as entertainment, adds to an experience of communality and to customer satisfaction:

> Music equals people having a good time and letting loose. Because
> whatever it is, people are engaged with a band, they kind-of bounce off
> them, they get their energy from the band . . . if the band are good and the
> band are energetic. People kind of get a little lift off it, and then people love
> the noise.

In his opinion a "good band" are typified by their ability to energise the audience and stimulate feelings of enjoyment and togetherness. Music and "the noise" are a glue that unites the audience into a participatory whole. The musicians thus become an essential focal point in the development of temporary community or spontaneous *communitas* (Turner 1969; 1982) amongst customers at the Sailor's Bar. Carl's descriptive use of the words love, energy, bounce and engagement, suggests Edith Turner's description of *communitas* as a form of "collective joy" (2012).

Carl is earnest in his support of live music and regularly hires young musicians seeking performance opportunities. He also gives a platform for original music through a regular summer concert series for singer-songwriters. Nevertheless, music bookings at the Sailor's Bar have a primary aim of generating revenue and establishing return customers for the business. For Carl, the scenery, the island setting, the outdoor activities and the live music performances are part of an entertainment "package". He considers his business as being closely connected to positive imagery of the island as a stage for activities and experiences:

> So when people have a good time they go away and they tell people they
> had a great time. Then the word gets out that [Clare Island is] a happening
> place; it's great fun at night time, there's lots of stuff to do during the day.
> So it's all . . . it's a package: it's entertainment, it's walking, it's cycling,
> it's fishing, it's whatever the hell is going on. It's a package, and music is
> part of that package, and . . . if you don't have [music], I would say the
> package is broken. People need to be entertained.

The music in the Sailor's Bar is always free to the customers and there is little expectation that customers should cover the cost. Therefore, although music is a resource for Carl's tourism business, it is also an expense:

> You can't really do without [music] but it's a huge expense. If [the
> bookings were] for a bar on its own it wouldn't be worth it, not a chance.
> But with the food and the accommodation you're able to spread the cost
> across two other sectors. It makes it worthwhile, but only just.

The business is the ultimate driver and economic determinant of the bookings, not the audience or the Clare Island public.

As owner of one of Clare Island's two main performance spaces, Carl has a significant role in shaping music-making within the island. Tourism is an important financial

stimulus for the development of cultural and artistic practices at a global (Rojek and Urry 1997) and national levels (Kockel 1994). The interactions between tourism and music-making—and music tourism itself—have become the focus of scholarly research in recent decades (Cashman 2017; Gibson and Connell 2005; Hayward 2001; Stokes 1999). Chris Gibson and John Connell observe that on popular tourist islands and island nations (such as Ireland), there are often strong economic and social connections between musicians and tourism providers (2005, 127). This can have positive benefits for local musicians and music-making. Tourism functions as both an important source of income for musicians and impetus for performance (2005, 129). In popular tourist destinations, hotels and bars often schedule music throughout the tourist season (Kaul 2009, 120) and—as evidenced at the Sailor's Bar in 2017—the local population can also avail of this entertainment.

Income and performance opportunities are essential for professional musicians, but there are downsides to scheduled entertainment on Clare Island, as elsewhere. The regularity of tourist entertainment reduces the opportunities for informal music-making such as informal sing-songs or traditional music sessions (Kaul 2009, 116–125). Gibson and Connell note that in tourist settings performance spaces become increasingly shaped by paid performers, standardised sets and dedicated audiences (2005, 128). In these tourist settings, music-making becomes a specialist activity organised by business or entertainment managers. At the Sailor's Bar, paid musicians have a dominant position within the venue and must fulfil their performance agreement.

On Clare Island, music-making for tourist entertainment conflicts at times with music as a spontaneous form of communal participation. As a musician and songwriter, islander Donal Moran has different criteria for assessing visiting groups than the entertainment and participation model promoted by Carl. Donal (born 1988) is a member of the younger generation of Clare Island musicians who came of age with the changes of island life in the 1990s (referenced in Chapter Two). In many regards, Donal is a product of the musical and social forces that define Clare Island in 2017. His experience of music-making developed within entertainment industry standards, but also in more informal traditional music sessions. Over the last number of years, Donal alternates between time spent on Clare Island with periods spent on the mainland. Whenever resident on the island, he is an initiator and collaborator in community music-making; organising music gatherings, performing in the bars, and singing in the Church with the choir or the Saints and Sinners gospel group. Donal considers the merits and failings of the summer gigs, or nights, at the Community Centre and Sailor's Bar:

Some nights are, I consider, more musically valuable than other nights.
Like if there's just some band in playing basically what was going to be on
the radio. Like there's no interest in that really. There's no excitement in
that really; they're just playing *songs you know the way you want to hear
them* and like it's just familiar.

Despite a strong personal interest in popular music, Donal suggests that some summer music
events run counter to their aims; that as a local, or regular, customer the music is sometimes
antisocial:

A lot of the bands that would come now [to Clare Island] I wouldn't really
go to see anyway. So it's more of an inconvenience to socialising as much
as anything because it makes it too loud to talk and because they're trying
to compete against socialising, and you're trying to compete against their
music.

However, Donal agrees with Carl's judgement that tourists coming to Clare Island and to the
island bars "want to be entertained". He identifies the role of musical familiarity in this
process and what he describes as a form of non-listening. Donal believes that most of the
summer audience want familiar musical material without much creative deviation:

[Audiences want bands] playing the songs they wanted to hear, the way
that they wanted to hear them. But to not actually listen to them, just to be
there.

Donal identifies a difference between actively listening on "musically valuable" nights and a
separate type of music-making in which social interaction and familiarity are more important
than direct listening. He considers there to be a qualitative difference in entertaining a pub
audience (music as social participation) and performances which showcase original music or
are otherwise "musically valuable":

With the original music nights, the Thursday [songwriter] nights and things
like that, there's a bit . . . you gain more musically from it or whatever . . .
They're very different . . . Like that night with Sive [20 July 2017] would
be very different musically to the night that would probably follow that;
Friday or Saturday where Beatroot or whoever the feck comes in. And like
plays great music or whatever, but plays really loud familiar music, and it
doesn't matter how loud you are.

Despite these comments, Donal accepts this non-listening approach within other music-
making contexts in the community. He observes that the communal aspect of a traditional
music session on Clare Island is often as valuable as the musical sounds:

> [At a traditional music session] nobody has to listen to a session for it to be perfectly fine. It can be a perfectly enjoyable session if nobody's listening to it apart from the guys in the circle.

Donal's comments imply that listening is dependent on the contexts of staging, audience expectation, and the commercial aims of the venue. The Sailor's Bar is ultimately a commercial space and offers music as a consumer product to enhance the tourist experience. Within this performance space business needs, presentational aesthetics and participatory expectations often clash. Donal's preference for "musically valuable" nights clashes with pub customers who want to engage in communal bonding "to not actually listen . . . just to be there". On the other hand, Carl's attempt to programme the experience of spontaneous *communitas* with a schedule of "good bands" encounters some inevitable limitations. At its worse, this attempt to manufacture "good times" becomes loud and anti-social for some customers. Overall, the Sailor's Bar is a performance space for varying music-making aesthetics and different levels of audience expectation.

Sailor's Bar singer-songwriter night

The Sailor's Bar singer-songwriter night (henceforth songwriter night) was a noteworthy addition to Clare Island music-making in summer 2017. These Thursday concerts form a popular music parallel to the Tuesday Seisiún at the Community Centre. Both events are relatively new to the island and both served to expand tourist season music-making to a mid-week timeframe. The songwriter night also provides a narrative focal point for the development of presentational performance and popular music on Clare Island.

Presenting this fieldwork example also reveals my position as an insider ethnographer within the three-tiered model proposed by Giazitzoglu and Payne (2018). Through my identity as a musician and performer, I connect to this ethnographic setting at the first, or superficial, level of insiderness. However, as an islander I connected to the setting at the deepest or third level of Giazitzoglu and Payne's model. My involvement in the songwriter nights reflected the various roles and interactions required of community members on a small island. By the time I began the ethnographic fieldwork (in 2017) I had already participated in the songwriter nights for several years. As a musician, I accompanied local singer-songwriter Donal Moran in his annual concert slot since 2014. On separate occasions, other visiting singer-songwriters invited me (as an island musician) to accompany them. To facilitate the ethnographic fieldwork, I offered to help run the songwriter night in 2017 and repeated the

role in 2018. As an islander, and a regular attendee, there was an easy transition into this direct involvement. This was a clear example where my role as an ethnographer was a minor addition to identity roles constructed over a lifetime of community interactions. In 2017, my responsibilities were to help with technical support—connecting cables, locating equipment, balancing sound levels—and to provide an MC styled introduction for the guest musician. Prior to my involvement, these tasks were performed by owner/manager Carl O'Grady. Following the opening of the Sailor's Bar in 2012, Carl scheduled the songwriter nights as a relaxed evening of presentational performance in contrast to the louder (participatory) weekend gigs. The songwriter nights took the initial form of an "open mic event" (where audience members are invited to give spontaneous performance) hosted by musician and songwriter John Hoban from Castlebar, Co. Mayo. By 2014, this initial format developed into a series of concerts showcasing a different singer-songwriter every Thursday during July and August. From 2014 until 2017, the songwriter night was divided into two sections. The first part of the evening featured an hour of original music from the guest musician. This was followed by an open-mic section and additional performances by the guest. In 2018, Carl decided to dispense with the open-mic section of the evening in an effort to create a condensed show and in 2019 decided not to run the series. The songwriter nights were advertised online by the Sailor's Bar as "a night of appreciation for new music where silence is observed and audience participation is appreciated"[13] and "an evening of listening where musicians get an opportunity to have their music and song heard in a quiet, intimate setting"[14].

Since 2014, Carl has encouraged the audience to adopt a theatre etiquette, conveyed through advertisement of the event and during his introductory comments. The stage area setup, in Room B, was like other performances and outwardly there was little to differentiate the songwriter night as a "listening" event. Before every performance, customers were asked to remain considerate of noise levels. Despite this presentation etiquette, customers were not obliged to listen or otherwise engage with the music in the setting. The bar and restaurant still operated according to commercial needs, but on a good night the music was audible and the audience appeared attentive; quiet conversations often continued, but the crowd gave a responsive applause at the end of songs. On busier nights, the audience energy

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[13] Sailor's Bar & Restaurant, "The Bard Room Sessions," Photos, Facebook, August 12, 2014. https://www.facebook.com/goexplorehostel/photos/a.304532652927484/714158808631531
[14] "Clare Island Nightlife," n.d. Go Explore Hostel, accessed September 15, 2018. https://www.goexplorehostel.ie/clare-island/nightlife/

overpowered the performance, and the audience appeared more interested in the bar and restaurant services than the music. On these occasions, there was an uneasy juxtaposition between maintaining a listening, or presentational, setting and managing audience noise levels.

There are certain similarities between bookings for the songwriter nights at the Sailor's Bar and the CCÉ Seisiún at the Community Centre. For example, over the period from 2014 to 2018 most of the guest musicians at the songwriter night were from the West of Ireland and several of these made repeat performances. The 2017 songwriter series comprised seven concerts beginning on July 13 and ending on 24 August (compared to nine Seisiún nights). No concerts were held on Thursday, 6 July or 31 August as they clashed with other events in the Clare Island social calendar. The 2017 songwriter night performers were:

13 July	Elaine Griffin	Co. Mayo
20 July	Saidbh O'Sullivan	Co. Kildare
27 July	John Hoban	Co. Mayo
3 August	Siobhán O'Donnell	Co. Sligo
10 August	Donal Moran	Clare Island
17 August	Brian Flanagan	Co. Mayo
24 August	Niall McCabe	Clare Island

Each musician accompanied their singing with a guitar and some were multi instrumentalists. Additionally, four of the seven included an accompanying musician during their performance. Five of the musicians are Mayo born (or based) and some—such as John Hoban—have played on Clare Island multiple times in the preceding years. It is important to note that two of the seven, Niall McCabe and Donal Moran, are from Clare Island. Their inclusion reflects the proficiency of islanders in popular music genres.

Sive: Thursday 20 July 2017

Sadbh O'Sullivan, from Co. Kildare—who performs under the stage name Sive—was the featured musician on 20 July 2017. She performed for four consecutive years at the songwriter night, beginning in 2014. Her partner and band member Paddy Hopkins

accompanied her on each of these visits. Sive's first performance at the songwriter night resulted from a personal connection with island musician Donal Moran. Donal was working as a barman at the Sailor's and suggested to Carl O'Grady that he include Sive in the line-up.

Sive is a representative of the contemporary Irish popular alt-folk music scene led by singer-songwriters such as Lisa Hannigan and James Vincent McMorrow. The alt-folk genre mixes folksong aesthetics with a wider pop instrumentation and song writing themes. Between 2014 and 2017, Sive gained increasing recognition as a musician. A few days before her 2017 performance on Clare Island, the *Irish Independent* "Weekend Magazine" featured Sive in an article entitled "Irish Women of Note: Six Up-and-Coming Irish Female Musicians You Need to Know" (Meagher, 2017).

Sive performs her own compositions and accompanies her singing with various instruments such as acoustic guitar, mandolin, vocal loop pedal, and a kalimba. Sive's artist website describes her music as:

> Combining haunting, multi-layered vocals with delicately woven musicality and an undeniable charm, Sive has carved a truly compelling style of alt-folk that is not afraid to differentiate from the norm.[15]

This produces an interesting listener experience where, within the boundaries of the genre, one is unsure where the music will go next. Singer-songwriter genres highlight originality—within the boundaries of popular song form—as a defining element of compositional style. This approach differs from most of the cover bands that play in the Sailor's Bar, who rely on familiarity with the music and a predictability to their performances.

As a singer-songwriter, Sive rarely plays in bars, and most of her concerts are in dedicated performance venues. Her songs are mostly quiet, reflective, and require that the audience listen rather than join in. Similar to Donal, Sive differentiates between performing original music and playing "cover songs" in a bar setting. This translates into a distinction between playing for listening and playing for a non-listening audience:

> Most bars I wouldn't really play in unless I was doing a cover gig and getting paid for it, you wouldn't necessarily bother playing your own songs in most bars because it's not going to be a fulfilling experience. You're not really going to connect with people.

For Sive, performing original music in a theatre venue is a more refined experience characterised by an audience that interact through attentive listening. She cites both the island

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[15] "About," n.d. Sive, accessed September 13, 2020. https://www.sivemusic.com/about

setting and the Sailor's Bar venue as being outside of her normal experience, but concludes that performing on the Clare Island creates an automatic connection with the audience.

Along with their role as musicians, Sive and Paddy are tourists and stayed on the island for a few nights surrounding each performance. They perceive a degree of social connection and sanctuary in the island setting and hold an enthusiastic, if somewhat idealised, perception of the island:

> [Sive] Every time we have come here we've talked about coming here for longer, about coming here for just a week or two of a writing retreat or something like that. So it definitely has an appeal of being somewhere you could do that, and still . . . feel like you were in a community I suppose. We haven't gone to the Community Centre this time actually, but the last time we did [2016] there was . . . people just seemed to be off-the-cuff playing a few tunes. So it seems like you could come and have a bit of a writing retreat but still be able to go out and get a bit of socialising and a bit of inspiration.

Their appraisal of the island setting was amplified through the experience of the previous songwriter concerts. Events surrounding the 2014, 2015, and 2016 performances left a lasting impression:

> Every year there's been a jam session [afterwards] and there's just been that real, communal . . . like where even a couple of years a couple of the lads who were here [Sailor's Bar staff], would grab a guitar and just jam along. So it was always very open, it wasn't just "here's a gig" and then the gig is over. The gig kind-of just is a way of starting something almost.

For both musicians, the island experience is more important than the opportunity to promote their original music. Both Sive and Paddy conclude that visiting the island is the real payment for playing at the Sailor's Bar:

> Paddy: Like, you don't come here for the fee.

> Sive: Coming here you're just happy to just cover [your expenses].

They consider any negative aspects of performing in a bar setting being surpassed by an overall sense of participatory *communitas* of the island setting.

Sive's performance in 2017 reveals the issues surrounding presentational performance at the Sailor's Bar. The details of the gig highlight the multifunctional demands of island performance spaces and the underlying bias for participatory performance in the island setting. On the night, Sive began her set just as a group of young locals entered the bar. This group were in high spirits ahead of a wedding and seemed more interested in conversation than listening. Along with these pre-wedding revellers, two groups of tourists showed little

interest in becoming audience members. Other customers readily transitioned to audience etiquette, but throughout the performance a portion of the crowd continued to talk or ignore the music. The overall audience numbers were small; with fifteen people surrounding the performance area (Room B and C) and similar numbers in the inner bar (Room A). Sive has a quiet demeanour and her stage banter disappeared in the hubbub of conversation. Later that summer on 17 August, Brian Flanagan encountered similar issues but with a smaller section of the audience. The only time he gained their attention was when he sang a well-known cover song and the group sang along. Other musicians at the songwriter nights shifted their performance approach depending on audience reaction or lack thereof. Sligo musician Siobhán O'Donnell is an experienced pub entertainer with a strong stage presence. On 3 August 2017, she performed only a few of her own compositions to what was a lively but attentive audience. After the gig, I discussed with her how the songwriter nights are usually for original music. Siobhán found it hard to believe the bar setting could be conducive to such personal performance and asked "do people really come here and do an hour of their own songs?" (Field Notes, 3 August 2017).

Some audience members seemed to engage fully with the presentational aesthetics of Sive's performance (the following interactions are recorded in Field Notes, 20 July 2017). One listener spoke of his enthusiasm for the gig and for Sive's musical abilities. In his estimation, she was good enough to be "playing at Vicar Street", an esteemed Dublin city venue. Another audience member felt that "she really deserves silence" but acknowledged that it was difficult to enforce theatre etiquette in a bar room performance. Audience behaviours suggested two different interpretations of this musical performance. Some interesting juxtapositions occurred as the listeners and the non-listeners interacted with each other: while a nonchalant barman collected empty glasses beside the stage area, a German tourist whispered, "is it ok to make a photograph?" and thanked me quietly when I said it was. Morton, a Danish visitor to the island, was bewildered by this uneven reception. In a somewhat bemused tone he says, "I get the feeling that not a lot of people are listening".

Despite these observations and objections, none of the listeners called for the other patrons to be quiet. There was no expectation that individuals should remain silent against their wishes. This attitude is in contrast with the Seisiún taking place two nights beforehand at the Community Centre bar. At the Seisiún on 18 July 2017, an audience of similar size maintained a comfortable balance between listening and socialising for over four hours. At that event, various audience members called for silence whenever inappropriate noise levels interfered with the listening environment. As suggested in Chapter Three, interactions

between the audience and the performers are central to the Seisiún; a successful night results from energy (participatory warmth) spread throughout the room. At the songwriter nights in 2017, there was no evidence of such group ownership of the music-making experience. Instead, the songwriter night signals presentational performance aesthetics and the separation of active social agents (musicians) from passive ones (audience) (Turino 2008, 26). The conceptual and physical staging of the event created a different set of audience and performer expectations; the model of audience participation is one of passive engagement with the performance. A good audience member is one who sits looking at the performer, listens closely to the music, and claps after each song. This is the type of "audience participation" invited in the Sailor's Bar advertisement of the events (cited above) and also corresponds to Sive's idea of "connecting" with people. However, this model of attentive listening contrasts with other music at the Sailor's Bar. The success of a Friday or Saturday performance is gauged by what Carl describes as a group's ability to energise—or "lift"—the audience into revelry and energetic participation.

3. Individuals, entertainers and entrepreneurs

Audience behaviour at Sive's performance represents the overlapping of musical fields (participatory and presentational) and the interactions between island community and tourism in 2017. However, music as entertainment for tourists is a relatively recent addition to community life. Since 2012, the Sailor's Bar played a significant role in the increase of tourist entertainment, but the phenomenon of mainland musicians playing for a mainland (tourist) audience began in the 1960s at the Bay View Hotel. While tourism provided an impetus for changes in island music-making, islanders were not passive bystanders to these developments. From the mid-1960s onwards, both islander and tourist expectations of music as entertainment reshaped Clare Island music-making practices.

The self-sufficient music-making at house and station dances in the 1950s and 1960s (described in Chapter Three) did not translate readily to a commodified form. The motives, and social function, of performing at a station dance were distinct from the commercial demands of pub based entertainment. Music-making for dances was also influenced by the personal circumstances of local performers. With a small population—and a smaller pool of musicians—the performance demands on island musicians was high; even the absence of a single musician could have a large proportionate impact. One informant recalled how, following a family bereavement, a key island musician was unable to perform for over a year.

Other prominent musicians—such as Paddy Winters—emigrated from the island in the 1940s and 1950s and were only present during annual holiday visits.

From the 1960s onwards, the pub sessions became increasingly important outlets for music-making and social life throughout Ireland (Vallely 2011, 611). However, Clare Island pub sessions remained sporadic and dependent on a small pool of musicians. Padraic O'Malley recalls how in the 1980s music-making and dancing in the pub continued to rely on spontaneity and the enthusiasm of the local performers:

> When I'm talking about the spontaneity . . . [it] depended on somebody picking up the accordion and playing it. I mean, there was . . . I think McCabe's [pub] had a house accordion, an accordion in the house, that was a thing. The musician mightn't have one with them, so that's the one they played. So you depended on that sometimes for dancing . . . it mightn't always be organised.

Taylor observes that rural house dances were often spontaneous (2013, 110) and Padraic's description of dancing in the pub reveals this informal music-making transposed from the cottage kitchen to the pub setting.

Informal music-making, at sessions or house dances, was a different activity to the contractual form of pub music. Organised musical entertainment is a recent addition to island social life. Bernard McCabe recalls his frustration trying to establish a booking protocol with local musicians during the 1970s and 1980s. In his assessment, hiring musicians for McCabe's bar was sometimes a "hit and miss" relationship, with no agreed format. Also many of the island players—stalwarts of the station, parish hall and house dances—were uninterested in playing for payment.

> They'd play a tune like . . . but they weren't, in all honesty they weren't in to having big sessions of music. Well, they'd play a few tunes but you couldn't say that you'd hire them.

This generation of island musicians were enculturated in the non-commercial, or "gift economy" (McCann 2001), of house dances. Against this background, the commodification of traditional music sessions (Kaul 2007) presented unfamiliar forms of contract and social motivations for performing. Bernard recalls that even when bookings were agreed upon, it was often a haphazard affair. The lack of standardised format, or experience of music-business standards, often generated tensions:

> The whole system with them it was awful unsatisfactory, and you didn't know when they were going to play, or how much they were going to charge.

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Some of these issues were part of an adaptation period between older forms of music-making and newer pub entertainment standards. But ultimately the need for standardised and scheduled music-making stretched the existing casual arrangements of house dances. Bohlman (1988) describes how the commercialisation of folk music creates new demands on traditional practices and changes existing rules. As folk music becomes an entertainment commodity, new layers of specialisation and professional approaches to performance alter existing practices (1988, 131–132). On Clare Island, this led to a fundamental change in local music-making as the same musical material became framed in commercial performance structures.

In the twenty-first century, island musicians are fully adapted to commercial approaches; some perform as professionals in entertainment industry settings. Despite these adaptations by locals, the self-sufficient model of islanders performing for islanders transformed from the 1960s onwards. In 2017, island venues employ mainland musicians to fulfil bookings and provide musical variety. On Clare Island, the development of a modern tourist industry—and the Bay View Hotel—played an important role in these changes.

The Beat Minstrels Showband

The performance by the Beat Minstrels Showband at the Bay View Hotel on 14 August 1966 was a key moment for these changes in island music-making. This was the first time a band travelled to the island for a concert of popular music. Several mainland music fans accompanied the group, and therefore this was also the first occasion that a mainland audience travelled to Clare Island to hear mainland musicians. This pattern—mainlanders entertaining mainlanders—was at the core of the majority of performances at the Sailor's Bar in 2017. Therefore, Sunday 14 August 1966, is the start date for a shift from community focused music-making to tourist entertainment as the principal stimulus for music on Clare Island.

The members of the Beat Minstrels Showband (circa 1966) became influential personalities in the west Mayo music scene and some were still active in 2017. In 1966, the band and its members represented a new musical entrepreneurship in the region. The 1966 line-up featured group leader Basil Morahan (saxophone, guitar and vocals), John Walsh (rhythm guitar and vocals), Liam Grealish (drums and vocals), John Ryan (accordion and vocals), and Jackie Foley (bass guitar and vocals). The group were a product of the showband era (Miller 2014) and disbanded at the end of the 1960s.

The individual members continued to perform and all of them made significant contributions to the Co. Mayo music scene. Liam Grealish is also a fiddle player and in 2017 continued to perform traditional music around Co. Mayo. John Ryan became a well-known producer and arranger for Country and Irish artists such as Daniel O'Donnell, Big Tom, Philomena Begley and others. Band leader Basil Morahan gained national recognition as "Dan the Street Singer" and through his community activism. Writing in the *Connaught Telegraph* in 2015, Tom Gillespie describes something of Basil's colourful and active character:

> Dan the street singer, a school teacher by profession, appeared regularly on the Late Late Show and other television programmes and he recorded a number of albums . . . His Fame saw him emerge as one of the country's foremost cabaret attractions and he enjoyed huge popularity all around the country . . . In the 1975 Mayo West by election, in which Enda Kenny was first elected to the Dáil, Basil stood as an independent candidate, where he received 1,481 first preference votes. (Gillespie 2015)

John Walsh returned many times to Clare Island playing as part of a music duo alongside his wife Maureen. In my recollection—as an insider ethnographer and guitar player—the first electric guitar I saw in real life belonged to Walsh. Padraic O'Malley remembers this music duo as one of the few regular performers for Clare Island events in the 1980s and 1990s. Their main job as musicians being to get the island audience dancing:

> During the summer there would always be bands visiting . . . I remember The Evergreens, John and Maureen, they played kind of like a wedding band . . . and they would play whatever got people out on to the floor.

Jackie Foley was active in community development in Westport and also returned to perform many times on Clare Island in the intervening years. His cover band Twice as Nice were the house band for the biannual Clare Island Singles Weekend from the late 1990s to the early 2000s.

Few islanders can recall the details of the Beat Minstrels performance on Clare Island in August 1966. Hotelier Chris O'Grady remembers little about the occasion except that people travelled from Westport and Louisburgh to the island for the concert. His strongest memory is of converting the Bay View Hotel dining room into a performance space and of the impact of the dancing on the floor finish:

> It was the time when women wore these stiletto-heels and they had a steel point on the end. Well the next day, the state of my lovely wooden floor. It was destroyed! I had to sand it and eventually put carpet down. (Field Notes, 14 December 2018)

Though John Moran was present on the night (accompanied by his parents) he describes the concert being so novel, for Clare Island, that it lay outside of his frames of reference. He recalls afterwards trying to describe the band to his uncle and having no relevant words for the performance style, the musical genres or the instruments (Field Notes, 16 March 2017). John's older brother Máirtín (eighteen in 1966) was also in attendance on the night. But has no lasting impressions of the occasion:

> That was probably the first time I seen a group of musicians playing together . . . like as organised group music, it was probably the first time. When that was, I have no idea. Nothing else sticks out . . . I don't know what the occasion was.

Cyril McCabe was also eighteen years old at the time and recalls the event as being important in the community because of the novelty factor, but little of the exact details. He claims that this was the first occasion where guitar based popular music was the focus for a social gathering on the island:

> I remember the first dance that music was brought in [for] . . . that music came in to play. It was your man from Louisburgh . . . ahem, later on he was known as Dan the Street Singer . . . ahem, Basil Morahan! He came in and he played . . . there were instruments, a multi instrument thing, and we danced there.

Although John, Máirtín and Cyril have forgotten the specifics of this performance, each of them recalled the novelty of the ensemble playing, and popular music instrumentation, on Clare Island in 1966.

An article in the *Connaught Telegraph* on 8 September 1966 provides some details of the performance. The correspondent is unnamed, but the tone and perspective suggest that one of the Beat Minstrels wrote the piece. Basil Morahan's obituary from 1998 describes his work as a social commentator, author and columnist ("Basil Remembered Through the Years," *Mayo News*, July 8, 1998). Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest Morahan wrote this account, but there is no direct evidence to support that assertion. The correspondent gushes enthusiasm and describes a performance of historic significance. The article title, "The Best Ever", captures the energy surrounding the occasion:

> And what a night this was! What a thrill for any showband to find that right from the start their style of playing and their variety of music was wildly applauded by a people who were witnessing such a live show for the first time in the history of that pleasant island. What an added thrill to find, entering at the doorway, a fleet of fans from the mainland, who made the journey across with nothing but the stars to light their way. ("The Best Ever," *Connaught Telegraph*, September 8, 1966)

The writer continues with a description of the openness of the island community and the intergenerational aspect of the gathering:

> And somehow the blend of young and not so young faces in that assembly gladdened one's heart beyond words. It might well be a historic night in the world of show biz for there a unique—and to those who didn't make the trip possibly an incredible—live picture was created. It was the sight of the teenager stepping out the "set" and the "siege" [Siege of Ennis] side by side with grey-haired light-hearted veterans. It was more, because these grand old soldiers and ladies were too sociable to "sit out" anything, and one found them hopping about to "La Yanka" and rock 'n' roll music to the amazement of the younger generation. When or where before can be recalled such sociable, open, clean fun? There was no place in Clare Island for the "die-hards" everybody's expression was one of the "welcome to our party" type. (Ibid)

Although written in 1966 this description might easily describe an event in 2017 where similar levels of intergenerational participation and bonding are observable. This description of social bonding also mirrors the inclusiveness of a station dance, albeit with different music and dance styles. As highlighted in Chapters Two and Three, intergenerational socialising remains central to music-making events on Clare Island. It is also significant to note that an eclectic selection of musical styles remains as a key characteristic of groups that perform on the island.

Dance and entertainment

As described in the above article, the music of the Beat Minstrels crossed between traditional and popular genres. During their performance on Clare Island the band incorporated Irish set and céilí dancing, rock-and-roll, and international pop music (such as the 1965 Spanish chart-topper "La Yenka"). In an interview with Oliver Whyte in 2014, Beat Minstrels guitarist John Walsh recalls how the Beat Minstrels selected their musical material based on audience participation. The Beat Minstrels repertoire was eclectic and included "anything you could dance to" (Whyte 2014). This musical eclecticism was typical of the Irish showband scene (O'Keeffe 2002). Rebecca Miller notes that the main goal of the showbands was to keep "audiences entertained and dancing" (2014, 77). As entertainers, the showbands varied their repertoire to ensure the widest audience appeal. In their role as entertainers, some showbands included theatrical skits and comedy routines to add to the "show" (Miller 2014, 78). The Beat Minstrels were popular around Co. Mayo for their ability to engage audiences both with music and their stage presence. An entertainment news piece from 1967 describes Basil Morahan as an excellent MC and states that he was "complimented by members of the Royal Showband for his showmanship and expertise with the microphone" ("The Unbeatable

Minstrels," *Western People*, April 8, 1967). This compliment was an endorsement of Morahan's abilities from one of the most popular showbands in Ireland.

The showband approach to audience entertainment is often dismissed by critics as "imitative, inauthentic" (Miller 2014, 98) and a symbol of cultural debasement (McLaughlin and McLoone 2000, 188). More balanced voices acknowledge the showbands as a product of a particular moment in Irish cultural history. The showband scene represents a convergence of economic, cultural, and social factors (Miller 2014, 91) epitomised in the 1960s Lemass era of Irish politics (Brown 2004; Gibbons 1996; Lee 1989). While the showbands may be the product of a particular moment in history, they were also a means of connecting local communities to international cultural forms. Gerry Smyth considers the showbands to be not just the product of economics but active agents in their own social environments:

> The showbands might be considered the typical cultural expression of the Lemass era in Ireland; like his administration, the showbands still ostensibly serviced the local community, but both were determined to re-introduce into that community the values and possibilities of a modern world which had been shunned by the prevailing powers (an assortment of protectionist politicians and Catholic clergy) since the early part of the century. (2005, 12)

As well as being purveyors of 1960s popular culture, groups such as the Beat Minstrels were individual agents (musicians) performing within their own local and regional areas. Basil Morahan and his fellow musicians provided an opportunity for Clare Islanders to experience popular culture, entertainment industry practices, and cosmopolitan values within the local community.

In many regards, the Beat Minstrels fulfil Carl O'Grady's criteria for a good band. The Beat Minstrels played lively music, had an entertaining stage presence, and engaged skilfully with a broad audience. On Clare Island in 2017, the ethos of the showband era is still relevant and audience participation—participatory aesthetics (Turino 2008)—remain as core values in the performance of popular music. As stated previously, Carl tries to respond to his business clientele, and perceives a demand for audience participation and connection; for "bands that people enjoy". Carl observes that if bands create a "show" the audience become energised by the band and through this their experience of islandness is intensified.

By the 1990s, it was no longer a novelty for musicians to visit the island, or to perform on a stage. Padraic has witnessed a corresponding shift in local expectations over the last thirty years. His impression is that in the twenty-first century islanders expect to be offered entertainment as a motivation for social gathering rather than as an enhancing factor:

The way people socialise now has changed. Unless there's something to go out to, unless there's entertainment on of some sort they won't attend it, so that lends itself to organised music on the weekends.

This attitude contrasts with older forms of music-making and socialising that demanded active involvement and individual contribution. Cyril remembers the group activity required in organising an evening of dancing and entertainment in the 1960s. Such occasions often began with convincing a willing neighbour (in this case Jane Moran) to provide space for music-making:

So we'd all gather up in the house that night and have the dance. There wouldn't be food, there wouldn't be drink, there wouldn't be anything in the house. She cleared the kitchen, put seats around the kitchen and we'd get someone . . . haul someone in to play music and we'd have a dance. And a load of people would turn up. They weren't there for drink, they weren't there for food, just for the craic.

Group participation and communal management were central to events such as this. In Cyril's description, the dancers initiated the music-making and co-opted other islanders to fill in hosting and performance roles. Although newer forms of entertainment were being slowly introduced, this grassroots self-sufficient approach remained a central part of island life from the 1960s to the 1980s. In this period, islanders continued to entertain islanders within community (not tourist) dominated spaces. In 2017, some island events—mostly in the off-season—retain this self-sufficient approach, but it is only a minor part of the annual cycle of music-making. Along with media entertainment at home, scheduled music in the island bars has removed the impetus for these self-sufficient forms of music-making.

4. Bookings, logistics and experiencing islandness

In 2017, most of the music performed at the Sailor's Bar was from within the wider popular music cannon. The majority of performances were of rock and pop, but also contemporary folk in the form of singer-songwriter and alt-folk genres. As in other years, there were several traditional Irish music sessions, but most of these were informal rather than booked by the management. Carl O'Grady made booking arrangements for the 2017 season over the preceding winter and spring. This presents a significant workload as the systems for bookings are often organic and haphazard. He describes the consistent effort involved in booking musicians:

> There's a lot of work that has to go into it throughout the year . . . you don't just sit down over a weekend and say "I need to book my bands" . . . because you're waiting for people to get back to you. Then you're [also] looking for new bands . . . And then, you're constantly trying to fill dates . . . and I still have a load of dates to fill. So it's a never ending battle, you're always at it.

Carl utilises a variety of sources and means to find musicians for the Sailor's Bar. Despite an existing list of contacts, he believes it necessary to maintain variety and add new bands to the schedule each year. This list of entertainers forms a "bank of contacts" from which Carl taps in to each season:

> I built up a bank of contacts over the years . . . and then you get leads on bands, you contact them, you send it up on Facebook, people contact you. And then there's the guys that have been here before, through my past work and bands that people enjoy. You build up a bank. And I still don't have enough to be honest, because at the same time you don't want to bring back the same bands all the time. You want to bring back something new.

Carl sees the island setting as a negative impact on bookings as it remains separated from routes and performance circuits. It is difficult to find groups willing to take the initial booking due to the travel restrictions of the ferry crossing and an imposed overnight stay:

> The biggest disadvantage I would say is just, there's nobody knocking on your door and there's no circuit of entertainment. You know, you go to Westport and there's a circuit of bands that [perform in] Westport, and there's people knocking at your door. It's the same for everything to do with an island, same for staff, same for everything.

The stresses and challenges of organising music continue after the initial booking. As bookings are on a verbal contract basis, there is no guarantee that bands or musicians will fulfil their obligations. Occasionally during the summer, bands cancelled at the last minute citing various commitments such as double-booking or illness. The island setting again contributed to these issues and made it difficult to find replacement acts:

> [Bands] ring you back sometimes and say, "Shit I can't do this date I'm sorry" and some do it the day before the bloody event and some don't tell you at all! So that's a real kick in the nuts . . . so it is a challenge.

Without a formal agreement for bands to fulfil the booking by some other means—such as providing alternative musicians—these issues force Carl to organise last minute entertainment. Many of the weekend guests at the Go Explore Hostel are group bookings who travel to Clare Island for specific party events (birthdays, staff parties, hen and stag parties) and Carl is obliged to fulfil the entertainment schedule even with short notice. In the 2012–

2017 period, I performed with other island musicians as an emergency substitute on several occasions under such circumstances.

Performing on an island

Despite improvements to the ferry service since the 1980s (described in Chapter Two), the boat journey to Clare Island remains an obstacle to performing musicians. To begin with, instruments and other delicate musical equipment must endure a robust cargo journey. Rock and popular music ensembles typically have a larger assortment of drum components and amplification than traditional musicians. During most journeys to the island, instruments are loaded by hand onto and off the ferry. This creates a level of risk with items passed by a human chain up and down concrete steps and across the threshold of pier and boat. These are mostly trouble-free processes, but there is always a potential for disaster; several years ago an accordion was crushed between the boat and the pier during offloading.

Salt water has a devastating, corrosive effect on amplifiers, electronic equipment and speakers. Although the ferry operators do their best to ensure the safe passage of all goods, the nature of the crossing means that the deck is often wet with salt laden sea spray. Some music groups—especially those who frequent the island—have their mainland transportation brought to the island as roll-on cargo, or lifted by crane onto the ferry. However, this is not always a practical solution as deck space for cargo is often limited and roll-on roll-off services depend on appropriate tidal levels. The island bars, in their capacity as regular performance spaces, attempt to mitigate these risks to equipment, and transport issues, by providing P.A. systems for visiting groups. As described above, the Sailor's Bar offers a built in system while the Community Centre bar has provided a portable P.A. since circa 2002.

By 2017, ferry operators (and island audiences) are familiar with the backline, or amplification equipment, required by modern performing groups. This is a relatively recent adaptation. In the early 1980s, The Shaskeen Ceili Band were one of the few groups to travel to Clare Island with drums and amplification. Former publican Bernard McCabe recalls the visual impact of the instruments on the small deck of The Dolphin (see Chapter Two) when he collected the band from the pier on Clare Island. His memory of the experience reveals how unusual such equipment appeared in the island setting:

> They came with a boatload of . . . a boat load of implements. They'd a
> drum, a big drum about four foot high! I went down the slip to meet them
> and I looked at the amount of gear that was in the boat. I said, "What in the

name of God! Where is that going?", they said, "We're going playing for you" [Laughs] . . . most of it went in the shed.

The small floor space and acoustic environment of McCabe's bar provided no room for excess amplification, and most of the equipment was unused. Prior to these early introductions of amplification, island music-making often required little more than an accordion. Bernard's description also suggests that the novelty factor of group performances on the island—described previously in the analysis of the Beat Minstrels—remained into the 1980s.

Alongside problems of transporting equipment, the ferry timetable creates additional travel demands and time constraints for musicians. During summer 2017, the last ferry departed Roonagh pier on the mainland at 6.45pm. Consequently, even the nearest mainland bands (living in Westport) had to begin their journey to the gig by 6pm at the latest. Furthermore, visiting bands could not return to the mainland before the 8.45am morning sailing the following day. These limitations impose a greater commitment to gigs on Clare Island for musicians and the boat journey imposes a non-negotiable structure to this movement. In normal circumstances, musicians cannot arrive or depart outside of the scheduled sailings.

In their work on Gabriola Island in Canada, Jaigris Hodson and Phillip Vannini (2007) consider how the ferry journey, as a medium of communication, shapes the experience of island life. The ferry schedule creates a unique ecological configuration of time (2007, 262) that separates island life from mainland spaces. Hodson and Vannini propose that islanders and tourists experience this "island time" as a subcultural or countercultural interaction with modern life:

Island time means a later time than what the universal clock says, it means being as late as the ferry is, and it means moving as slowly as the ferry does. The uniqueness of "island time" resides in the fact that its slow pace denotes a countercultural (or least somewhat exceptional) current in a society governed more and more by the logic of speed. (2007, 262)

Thus, while the boat journey to Clare Island presents certain inconveniences, it also adds a degree of novelty for visiting musicians. A popular example of this enthusiasm is presented by the band The Saw Doctors who penned the line "we'll get the ferry out from Roonagh and wave all our cares good bye" (The Saw Doctors 1996). On a visit to Clare Island in 2018, band member Leo Moran recalled the excitement the group felt when they travelled to the island in the early 1990s. In his estimation the ferry journey was a "huge part" of their

attraction to the island: "people love an excuse to go to an island, even the boat journey is all part of the adventure" (Field Notes, 15 Sept 2018).

Many performers take playing on the island as an occasion separate from their everyday experiences. Their time on the island becomes part of a holiday experience and an opportunity to connect to experiences of social bonding and islandness. Sadbh O'Sullivan (Sive) and Paddy Hopkins described above how being on the island was a form of payment in itself. Visiting musicians often comment on the separation of the island from the rest of the country and regard the island setting as an added incentive to their performances. Songwriter Elaine Griffin described being on the island as like "stepping onto another planet" (Field Notes, 26 July 2018) while CCÉ Seisiún regular Camilius Hiney described the island as being "outside the country" (Field Notes, 24 July 2018). A tourist (and traditional musician) who joined the music-making at the CCÉ Seisiún in 2017 described the openness of the Seisiún as being compounded by the alterity of the island setting: "I love coming out here, people make you feel so welcome. It's like stepping away from the real world" (Field Notes, 25 July 2017). This tourist statement reflects the widely held viewpoint that island life is qualitatively and experientially different from the rest of Irish life. This assumption links to the ideas about island life, and conceptions of centre and periphery, discussed in Chapter One.

Holiday and leisure time creates an added liminal experience in tourist perception of Islandness. Liminality (from the Latin root word *limen*, meaning threshold or doorway) implies transition, but also of inhabiting a border or marginal space. Liminal experiences outside of the mundane—such as being on an island—alter perceptions of time and deconstruct the temporal framework of mainstream life. On the island of Tenerife, Michelle Thomas (2005) examines the liminality of the sun holiday experience. For the participants in her study, holiday time permitted different behaviours to everyday life. Holiday time caused participants to alter their attitudes towards interpersonal relationships, perceptions of time, and rules of social behaviour. Alternative or subcultural timeframes can also act as a critique of social norms (Halberstam 2007). As both a literary device and an Irish subcultural narrative, island life has continuously allowed mainland society to imagine alternative ways of living. The tourist experience of being on Clare island and "stepping away from the real world" becomes an opportunity to experience idealised forms of social interaction in the performance space that is the island.

The imposed overnight stay on Clare Island influences performance behaviour and musicians relax into "island time". In 2017, regular visiting groups, such as Beatroot from Co Monaghan, treated their island gigs as a party and often performed for longer than at typical

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mainland pub gigs. Despite the added hassle of travelling to the island, Carl observes that many groups treat their gigs at the Sailor's Bar as a short holiday. This approach offers practical benefits to both the visiting musicians and to the Sailor's Bar:

> They come and they have a good time. They enjoy it themselves, and ninety-nine percent of the time they ask for another gig, and they want to come back again . . . A lot of bands I book want to do two nights because they can relax during the day and they don't have to go lugging gear and stuff. Which is appealing to them, and sometimes it's good for us because . . . they know what they're doing on the second day. There's less hassle for us bringing them down, bringing them back up [to the ferry], getting them set up all that kind of stuff.

Carl feels that the island offers a certain freedom, and that this is part of the appeal for visiting musicians:

> They enjoy the island experience of course and they enjoy the fact that the island atmosphere . . . it's a bit more free.

There is a paradoxical element to this view, as the geographical environs of the island are synonymous with confinement rather than freedom. But Carl's comment suggests a sense of social freedom; a reduction of the constrains associated with modern living.

Musician Andy Connolly is a third generation Clare Island expat. His grandfather, Paddy Winters, was a musician and one of the many islanders who emigrated to England after the second world war. Andy makes annual holiday visits to Clare Island and describes the paradoxical attraction of feeling freer on the Island than in his native Liverpool: "Although you're on a small island here and you're isolated in some ways . . . I feel we're the ones trapped in the big wide world, [trapped by] society". He acknowledges that the island is distant (isolated) from urban centres and services, but identifies an inverse social closeness. Andy observes the distinction between the impression of isolation on an island, and the social distancing—or alienation—of individuals through career goals, urban living and modernity:

> I just think you get into this circle or this system and it traps you. I think it's quite suppressing as well. Where [on Clare Island] nobody's trapped everyone's free, everyone's got time . . . there's a different nature here, there's a different thought process with people. I think there's a wisdom here . . . I don't know . . . I don't know how to explain it really, but there's an assurance here, I find. [In Liverpool] people are panicking all the time. People are worried . . . and they're in the rat-race.

As a visitor to Clare Island, Andy has a limited perspective of island living; one also tempered by a liminal position within his own "holiday time" (Cashman 2017; Thomas 2005). But as Andy observes, there are stark differences between urban living and life on an

island with a small population. In this close communal setting one can easily develop what Dunbar describes as "genuine social relationships" (1996, 77). Andy's experiences of genuine relationships on Clare Island are often a simple matter of recognition:

> [In Liverpool] I could be surrounded with my neighbours . . . by thousands of people, and yet I only know and speak to a handful of them. When I come here, you can stop and chat to anybody . . . and they all know who I am, [islanders know] my background! That my granddad's from the island, and I love that.

Andy's description is similar to Erik MacGiolla's experience of urban life in Sweden versus island life (Chapter Two). For Andy, recognition and knowledge of personal history is another form of what Erik describes as "non-alienation".

Conclusion

Chapter Four presents the last part of this investigation of music-making and describes the multiple factors that guide music-making at the Sailor's Bar in 2017. Music-making at the Sailor's Bar demonstrates the various social, economic, individual and group actions that underscore community life and contribute to island vitality in the twenty-first century.
In 2017, tourism was the primary motivation for music-making on Clare Island. Through Carl O'Grady's explicit aim of providing tourist "entertainment", the Sailor's Bar was the de facto primary site for entertainment industry standards (Barnouw and Kirkland 1992; Shuker 2001) and presentational performance aesthetics (Turino 2008) on Clare Island. However, throughout the summer high-season, both the Sailor's Bar and the Community Centre bar maintained a schedule of popular music performances.

The Sailor's Bar songwriter series represents the fullest extent of entertainment industry norms on Clare Island. But these are relatively recent additions to island music-making and in Chapter Three islanders described different aesthetic, social and performance standards in the past. Audience familiarity—and even disinterest—during Sive's performance in 2017 contrasts with the abiding memories of novelty surrounding the performance by the Beat Minstrels in 1966. Between 1966 and 2017, the staging and performance of popular music has become commonplace on Clare Island. In this same period, professionalism, variety (musical and instrumental) and amplification altered the expectations of island audiences. These changes are yet another part of the ongoing process of adaptation described at the end of Chapter Three. The changes in island music-making between 1966 and 2017

reflect the activities of a living community adapting to new music-making trends and possibilities for social interaction.

At the Sailor's Bar in 2017, music-making was (ostensibly) a commodity created by mainland musicians to entertain a passing tourist audience. However, Carl believes music-making to be an important part of connecting tourists to the experience of being on Clare Island. The social and economic activities of tourism have negative and positive influences on island music-making and community vitality. Scheduled tourist entertainment constrains spontaneous music-making and, as Donal Moran suggests, loud summer bands can be "more of an inconvenience to socialising" rather than a positive addition. But tourism also brings new possibilities to island social life. Domestic and international tourism supplements the limited social and music-making resources of this small island population. Every weekend in summer 2017 included a new configuration of participants at music-making events on Clare Island. During performances at both the Sailor's Bar and the Community Centre, tourists and visiting musicians became—alongside island locals and visitors—members of a temporary music-making community. This temporary collective increases the potential for social bonding and generating positive experiences of islandness. For visitors and tourists such as Andy Connolly Saidbh O'Sullivan and Paddy Hopkins, the limited physical space, small population, and social intimacy of island music-making counteracts the extremes of modern anonymity and anomie. Through island music-making events and social interactions, these positive interpretations of islandness percolate into the local community.

Both the Sailor's Bar and the Community Centre bar are small venues where locals, visitors and tourists socialise together. All attendees (performers and non-performers) contribute to the music-making event and the embodied experience of islandness. In Chapter Two, Erik Mac Giolla observed that the physical constraints of the island setting forces social interaction and a deeper psychological connection between people. At a macro-level, the island setting (as defined in Chapter Two) imposes positive constraints on social interaction and music-making: Clare Island performance venues are conducive to generating literal and figurative warmth or closeness (Ó Laoire 2005, 163).

"Will you meet me on Clare Island?":

Music-Making, Islandness and Ethnography in a Small Island Community

Conclusion

This dissertation provides a comprehensive ethnographic account of music-making and islandness within the Clare Island community. The project presents an innovative approach to examining island life, and the research findings invite comparative studies of other island communities. The experience of islandness on Clare Island in the twenty-first century is neither uniform nor simple, but this original research shows that there is a pattern to the experience of islandness expressed through music-making. Through this ethnography, music-making emerges as an indicator of island vitality and community actions. The research also illustrates music-making as a mirror of the dominant settings of islandness on Clare Island. As a dynamic social process, participatory performance enables islanders to maintain a communal experience of islandness. While as a social, economic and cultural activity, music-making expresses the combined effects of sea, seasonality, buildings and population in the experiences of this island community.

This dissertation shifts the depiction of island life from outside (mainland) narrative to an ethnographic account that details Clare Island on its own terms. Each chapter guides this analysis towards progressively finer detail of islandness and music-making on Clare Island. Through Chapters One and Two, the research focus shifts from wider cultural narratives of Irish islandness to the general frames of islandness on Clare Island. Building on this foundation, Chapter Three describes the CCÉ Seisiún at the Community Centre bar and examines music-making as a tool for community interaction. Chapter Four refines this analysis through examples of music-making at the Sailor's Bar. This chapter narrows the focus to examine the influence of individuals, private enterprise and tourism within island music-making. Together these two chapters explain the island community as a dynamic social body sustained both through group action and individual initiative. Chapters Three and Four also describe social change and adaptation as an ongoing activity within island music-making and community life. Clare Island's

vitality and aliveness are further expressed by this continued growth and development.

Summary of chapter findings

Chapter One establishes the boundaries of this ethnographic research project. The chapter begins by detailing music-making and ethnography as tools for examining and articulating islandness. Following from this, the literature review in Chapter One outlines the wider context of the research. This review uncovers a thin corpus of ethnographic research conducted on Irish islands. Furthermore, the broader body of island literature often presents a stereotyping or mythology of the Irish islands. This perception of Irish islandness describes island life through themes of separation, peripherality, material poverty and cultural wealth. Irish islandness is both a category within Irish cultural narrative and one of the foundation myths of national identity (Ferriter 2018, 2; Kiberd 1991, 334; O'Toole 1997, 112). But this dominant narrative of Irish islandness does not account for the complexities of the lived experience described through ethnographic research. Islands such as Clare Island present a history of resilience, adaptation and connection to the outside world, often absent in non-ethnographic and popular interpretations of island life.

Despite a general conception of Irish islandness, island life occurs in individual island settings. Each of these island communities is shaped by the interactions between an historical (human) and a natural environment. Chapter Two examines the subtle distinctions moulding the particular experience of music-making and islandness on Clare Island. Through this investigation maritime access, seasonality, infrastructure, and population emerge as defining features of islandness on Clare Island. Each of these frameworks of islandness directly influences music-making on Clare Island. At an organisational level, island music-making depends on the built infrastructure and islanders socialise within available communal spaces. These spaces are in turn an analogue of the changing social forces within—and material wealth of—the island community. The frameworks of island experience also shape the social structure of island music-making. Through a description of participant profiles and music-performances in 2017, Chapter Two shows that island music-making includes non-local social actors in the form of visitors and tourists. The findings in Chapter Two suggest that the increase of outside participants in island social life in the twenty-first century is part of an established characteristic of life on Clare Island. Throughout the twentieth century non-residents and outside influences were a consistent part of music-making and island life.

Although outside influences shape island music-making in 2017, the major impetus for participatory music-making comes from within the community. Chapter Three examines this drive and presents the CCÉ Seisiún as a multi-layered example of islandness and community vitality on Clare Island. Most notably, the CCÉ Seisiún provides a performance template through which the island community maintains local customs of participatory performance. As a vehicle for social bonding, the Seisiún also forms a contemporary parallel to the older custom of station dances on Clare Island. In 2017, older islanders recall the station as an important part of community life during the twentieth century. Through their organisational structure, the stations provided a cyclical pattern for music-making and for maintaining island vitality.

Both the Seisiún and the station dance are templates for participatory performance and social bonding within island life. But alongside their comparative features, the differences between the Seisiún and the station dance illustrate changes and continuities in island life. Between the station dances in 1957 (described by Walsh in Chapter Three) and the 2017 Seisiún series, island music-making changed from a wholly amateur activity to one dominated by professionals. This process of change is central to islandness on Clare Island and essential in framing the historical perspective of this ethnography. Until the 1980s, Clare Island social life depended almost entirely on community resources. However, by the late 1990s, island music-making relied increasingly on input from the mainland. As professional musicians became a regular part of Clare Island's social life, island music-making became more complex. The new protocols of scheduled entertainment required greater co-ordination between venues and performers, and increasing levels of staging and technical expertise. These developments in music-making reflect patterns of modernisation, changes in social fashions and increased material wealth on Clare Island during the twentieth century. The changes are such that in 2017 the commercial space of the island's public bars—not the kitchens of island homes—are the primary site for music-making and entertainment on Clare Island.

The move from private space to the barroom—and the commercialisation of music-making—are major changes occurring within living memory. Since the 1960s, popular music performance standards (and the concept of music as an entertainment commodity) have become prevalent in island life. Chapter Four examines this trend and shows the central role of tourist entertainment within Clare Island music-making in 2017. On the surface, music at the Sailor's Bar is an entertainment product created by professional musicians and mediated by both

technology and commercial choices. However, many of these elements of music-making at the Sailor's Bar represent Irish social trends and performance norms (O'Connor 2001; Smyth 2005) rather than deliberate adherence to presentational performance aesthetics (Turino 2008). Chapter Four explains how, despite presentational staging and commercial influence, participatory performance goals (described in Chapter One) remain central to music-making at the Sailor's Bar. Similar to the Seisiún, the primary function of music at the Sailor's Bar is to generate fellow feeling (Ó Laoire 2005, 163), *communitas* (Turner 2012) or participatory warmth amongst the audience or customers. In 2017, locals, visitors and tourists describe the experience of music-making on Clare Island (irrespective of genre) as an opportunity for social bonding.

Music-making and island vitality

This research shows that cycles of participatory music-making and social bonding are part of island life over the last eighty years. On Clare Island in the twenty-first century this mechanism of island vitality (community bonding through music-making) emerges as a qualitative process spread out in annually repeating patterns. This subtle process is absent in quantitative (or snapshot) measurements of island life, but can be grasped through ethnographic analysis. In 2017, seasonal inputs of participatory performance—such as summer music-making at Sailor's Bar or the CCÉ Seisiún—exemplify this ongoing cyclical means of sustaining community vitality. Island vitality is not a quantitative tool and is instead an approximation of island community health. It manifests as a subconscious social attitude embedded in islanders' willingness to take part in music-making and to perpetuate a group experience of islandness. Vitality is an expression of islanders' desires to maintain community. Despite enormous changes since the 1940s, the Clare Island population display continued effort to perpetuate community through music-making and participatory performance.

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