

**TODD LECTURE SERIES;  
VOL. XIX; THE DIALECTS  
OF CO. CLARE, PART 1**

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**VARIOUS**

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OF CO. CLARE, PART 1**



ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY

III

TODD LECTURE SERIES

VOLUME XIX

Nils M. Holmer

THE DIALECTS OF CO. CLARE

PART I



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MAP showing distribution of certain *l* and *n* sounds.



## PREFACE

THE Clare Irish Phonology and Grammatical Sketch which is published in this volume represents the essential facts gathered during a survey of the various types of Irish spoken in Co. Clare and in the border area between Clare and Galway; it contains a limited part of the entire material, which was collected during the larger part of 1946. It was originally intended that this material should be published in two volumes, one containing a general description of Clare Irish along with texts and another one in the form of a combined index and dictionary. Owing to various circumstances, however, the preparation of the texts was delayed and since at the same time it was not decided whether the entire text material should be published (which would have meant a considerably larger volume), it was suggested that the part then ready in manuscript should be printed as soon as possible.

The Clare Irish monograph of which the following chapters on phonetics and grammar form part has a history of its own. Not long before the outbreak of the second world war, while the author was engaged in dialect research in the Gaelic Highlands of Scotland, he was encouraged by the interest which the Honorary Director of the Irish Folklore Commission, Professor Séamus Ó Duilearga, showed in this research to initiate an extensive project of collecting and describing certain dialects in the Clare and Galway border area, which were considered to be on the verge of extinction. This project could not be carried out until after the war, when the author arrived in Ireland early in 1946, to set out on an immediate expedition to the western coasts of Clare, starting at the very south end of the Clare Gaeltacht and with the vicinity of Carrigaholt for his headquarters. Working northward along the coast—the interior of the county proved to be almost devoid of native Irish—the isolated and highly interesting district of Fanore (facing Galway and the Aran Islands) was finally reached; by this moment, however, lack of time made it necessary to concentrate the survey to the northeastern border areas, in which strange mixtures of Clare and Galway Irish were found.\* In the eastern part of the county, that is, in the district

\* The parish of Gort (in Co. Galway) would have deserved special attention, but this part of the investigation had to be cut out almost completely.

bordering on Loch Derg, no Irish was found, although a special expedition was undertaken to these parts. Certain other parts, especially in the southeast, were left out of the project for the reason that they were not thought to be worth the trouble of a special visit, from the language point of view. Nevertheless, the author occasionally came across old speakers who maintained that they came from parts of Clare where it is doubtful whether any workable amount of native Irish could be found nowadays.

The merit of achieving a description of the Clare Irish indubitably goes to Professor Séamus Ó Duilearga and to the Irish Folklore Commission. Here the first lists of speakers and districts suitable for headquarters, etc., were prepared; during the last weeks of the investigation the author was accompanied by one of its staff, Caoimhín Ó Danachair, who was supplied with a car, whereby certain more distant parts of the research area became accessible. Finally, when after many years' absence from Ireland (during which time quite new materials were collected from North and South America, as well as from the Basque country in Spain) the author found an opportunity to take up the definite preparation of the Co. Clare material, he was hospitably accommodated in the rooms of the Irish Folklore Commission, having an easy access to maps, parish records, and innumerable other books of reference, at the same time as the opportunity of utilizing, whenever necessary, the advice and help of the competent staff, whose accumulated and detailed information as to the Irish parts of Ireland proved on many occasions invaluable. The need of assistance in these matters has been evident: the author was not always able to identify persons and places which he had not seen for so many years; the names given by the speakers were not always those which are used to-day; obscure passages in the texts could often be elucidated either by having reference to analogous texts in the inexhaustible supplies of stories and traditions in the archives or else by consulting some of the Irish-speaking archivists.

In this way, the first part of the intended Clare Irish monograph was ultimately ready in manuscript, in August 1950, along with slips to be used for the compilation of the dictionary.

Meanwhile, the preparation of the texts (in phonetics, with a transliteration in the normal Irish orthography) is being accomplished, to be published in a volume apart, whenever an opportunity is offered.

The author wishes to express his sincere and deeply felt gratitude to the Irish Studies Committee, as well as to the Royal Irish Academy, for the interest shown by these bodies in the present work, for their willingness to sponsor and to undertake its publication, and not least for generous grants-in-aid, by which the work was on two different occasions (in 1946 and 1950) supported materially.

NILS M. HOLMER.

*August 1952*

Since the above Preface was written, the MSS. of the Texts, Phonetic transcript, and a Dictionary part have been completed. These will form a second volume.

*August 1958*