Websites, digital archives & other online resources

Websites, online exhibits, and digital catalogues/indexes relating to the history and culture of Newfoundland and Labrador, English-language song traditions, and collections of Newfoundland song, music, dance, and stories.


A digital archive of ballad sheets. Digital versions of broadsides are searchable according to titles, themes, collections, dates, printers/publishers, locations, and Roud numbers.

Dohey, Larry. N.d. Archival Moments: Selections from the Archives, Live from St John’s, NL. Blog. [http://archivalmoments.ca/](http://archivalmoments.ca/)

A blog about Newfoundland and Labrador’s history and culture. Authored by the Director of Programming for The Rooms Provincial Archives, each post focuses on a ‘moment’ in provincial history and associates that narrative with the archival collections held in the provincial archives and museum.

English Folk Dance and Song Society. N.d. The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library: The Essential Folk Resource. [https://www.vwml.org/](https://www.vwml.org/)

The website of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library is the home of the Roud Folksong Index, a database of more than 240,000 references to songs that have been collected from English-language oral traditions from all over the world—including Ireland and Newfoundland. The site also provides access to the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library’s full catalogue and a range of archival resources and collections relating to English-language folk song and music.


A sub-archive of Memorial University of Newfoundland’s “Digital Archive Initiative.” This site features historically significant images from the community of Branch, as well as information about the settlement of the region.


A digital archive of songs collected by MacEdward Leach in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. This website makes available clips from Leach’s recordings, song transcripts, and collection history, and as well as contextual information about Leach, the singers, and the communities in which Leach collected.


This public history project brings together more than a thousand pages of articles on the provinces history, arts, economy, politics, history, and culture. Articles are authored by the university community based at Memorial University. The site also provides access to the ‘Dictionary of Newfoundland English,’ and a wealth of videos, images, and related resources.

A digital index of Newfoundland songs, including texts, availability in print collections, availability of recorded versions, links to performances, and notes on origins.

http://www.placentiahistory.ca/index.php/home

This society website provides access to images from the Placentia Bay region, as well as compiling essays on the history and culture of the area.

http://www.mun.ca/voicesofplentiabay/index.html

An online exhibition of song, music, and storytelling from around Placentia Bay, Newfoundland. Collected primarily by Eric West, the recordings, images, and historical notes featured on the website formed the basis of a live exhibition in the town of Placentia. Recordings of several of the singers featured in ‘A Grand Time’ are also available on the ‘Voices of Placentia Bay’ website, as are variant versions of many of the songs.

http://fresnostate.edu/folklore/BalladIndexTOC.html

An online index of English-language folk song. Each record includes a brief description of the song, details of authorship, location, references in print collections, and recordings.

https://mainlynorfolk.info/folk/songs/search.php

An index of English-language songs and tunes. It is searchable according to references by Steve Roud, Francis James Child, G. Malcolm Laws, and the Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection. The index provides references to recorded versions of songs, transcripts of variants, and descriptions of origins.

Reference, bibliographies, and discographies

General reference resources relating to published sources in Newfoundland song, music, and Irish-Newfoundland connections.


An index of approximately 1500 published song texts from the Newfoundland song tradition, organised according to titles and first lines. Published as part of the same series as Taft’s A Regional Discography of Newfoundland and Labrador, the two reference works are intentional complements.


A bibliography of sources relating to the Irish presence and experience in North America. The bibliography is organised according to region, including a section on Newfoundland, with additional thematic lists devoted to biography, Fenianism, and Orangeism.

Compiled with the intention of understanding the unique blend of Irish, country and western, and traditional musics that comprised Newfoundland popular music during the 1970s, this discography provides a detailed listing of recordings by Newfoundlanders as well as recordings of Newfoundland songs made by non-Newfoundlanders. Taft also discusses the range of recordings that existed within the record collections of Newfoundlanders.

### Ireland–Newfoundland connections

Sources pertaining to the historical relationship between Ireland and Newfoundland. This list is dominated by historical and geographical accounts of 18th and 19th century fisheries and case studies of communities in southeast Ireland and Newfoundland, as well as maps and diagrams demonstrating aspects of this history. Also included are scholarly studies of the literature and folkways that connect the two islands.


This historical atlas brings together interdisciplinary contributions from leading scholars to explore the history and geography of Ireland and its diaspora. It features full colour maps, images, and diagrams, and includes several chapters of relevance to the study of historical connections between Ireland and Newfoundland. These include: “Inistioge and the Nore Valley, County Kilkenny” by Edward McCarron and Fidelma McCarron (pp. 368–86) and “Point Lance: An Irish Settlement in Newfoundland” by John Mannion (pp. 387–409). The latter chapter, by John Mannion, is of particular relevance to understanding where the people who feature in this exhibition came from as it focuses on the Cape Shore and the particular conditions that led to its settlement by Irish migrants beginning in the late 18th century.


This paper, presented in the Seminario Annuale di Storia Atlantica at University of Genova, focuses on the biography and poetry of Donnchadh Ruadh Mac Conmara (1716–1810). Born in Co Clare, little is known about Mac Conmara, yet his poetry provides insight into the early links and lifeways of the Irish in Newfoundland.


*Essays and proceedings from the 16th International Conference of the Canadian Association for Irish Studies, held at Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 16–20 March 1983. The theme for the conference was Irish Culture from Grattan’s Parliament to the Famine and Links with Atlantic Canada.*


The introductory essay for a special issue interrogating the historical and cultural links between Newfoundland and Ireland, including the role of the tourism industry in inventing this connection.

Feder, Alison, and Bernice Schrank, eds. 1977. *Literature and Folk Culture: Ireland and Newfoundland*. Papers from the 9th Annual Seminar of the Canadian Association for Irish Studies at Memorial
University of Newfoundland, February 11–15, 1976. St John’s: Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Proceedings from a conference addressing the relationship between Ireland and Newfoundland, with topics including language, theatre, storytelling, song traditions, and other aspects of vernacular culture.


These historical atlases use a series of full-colour maps and diagrams to depict patterns of migration, settlement, and demographic change as influenced by broader events and historical trends. Several plates are of particular relevance to study of the relationship between Ireland and Newfoundland: “Plate 25: The Newfoundland Fishery, 18th Century” by John Mannion, W. Gordon Handcock, and Alan G. Macpherson (vol. 1); “Plate 8: Origins of the Newfoundland Population” by John Mannion and W. Gordon Handcock (vol. 2); “Plate 9: Trans-Atlantic Migrations, 1831–1851” by John C. Weaver, James de Jonge, Dannell Norris (vol. 2).


An article about the resurgence of Irishness on the Avalon Peninsula’s Southern Shore. The author considers historical plates, but also how commercial incentives of the tourism industry may incentivise more overt performances of a specifically Irish Newfoundland identity.


An article about the Memorandum of Understanding between the governments of Ireland and Newfoundland, and the role of this agreement in shaping perceptions of the relationship between the two islands.


Galway-born historical geographer John Mannion is the leading authority on Irish migration to Canada, particularly Newfoundland. His research encompasses field work in Newfoundland communities, as well as extensive archival and historical work on the linkages between Ireland and North America. These (and other) studies by Mannion, document not only origins and places of settlement, but also how people retained and adapted their cultural resources to new conditions.

A comparative study of the historical development of Irish identity in three diaspora communities: St John’s, Newfoundland, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Portland, Maine. The author suggests that the development of a sense of “Irishness” developed over generations through a complex interplay of local, regional, national, and transnational influences.


This interdisciplinary volume brings together essays by geographers, historians, folklorists, archaeologists, and other related disciplines on the topic of Kilkenny’s social, cultural, and political history. John Mannion and Fidelma Maddock’s chapter, “Old World Antecedents, New World adaptations: Inistioge immigrants in Newfoundland” (pp. 345–404), is a case study exploring patterns of marriage, profession, inheritance, and religions, both in Inistioge, Co Kilkenny, and in Newfoundland, pointing to motivations for migration, parallels in the circumstances of migrants and those left behind, distinctions in the two populations, and changes in circumstance based on location.


This interdisciplinary volume brings together essays by geographers, historians, folklorists, archaeologists, and other related disciplines on the topic of Waterford’s social, cultural, and political history. Two of the chapters, by Cyril Byrne and John Mannion, respectively, focus on the history of migration to Newfoundland and trade links. Byrne’s “The Waterford Colony in Newfoundland, 1700–1850” addresses issues of religion, language survival, and folkways among the Irish who immigrated to Newfoundland as part of the fisheries (pp. 351–72). Mannion’s chapter, “Vessels, Masters and Seafaring: Patterns of Voyages in Waterford Commerce, 1766–1771,” analyses the extent of the trade links and shipping between Waterford, Newfoundland, and the West Country during a brief period of the 18th century (pp. 373–402).


In “The Forgotten Irish,” Trew discusses how narratives of Irish, British, and American influence compete for prominence in Newfoundland’s public spaces. She focuses on Irish identity and influence in Newfoundland. Her discussion includes an interview with Aidan O’Hara and references the work he did to promote awareness of the cultural linkages between Newfoundland and Ireland.


This interdisciplinary volume brings together essays by geographers, historians, folklorists, archaeologists, and other related disciplines on the topic of Wexford’s social, cultural, and political history. John Mannion’s chapter, “A Transatlantic Merchant Fishery: Richard Welsh of New Ross
“and the Sweetmans of Newbawn in Newfoundland” (pp. 373–421), relates the history of the Sweetman firm. This family of merchants was largely responsible for the founding and settlement of the Cape Shore’s present day communities.

Collecting, archiving & disseminating Newfoundland oral culture

A list of sources relating to the people and institutions involved in compiling and disseminating resources relating to Newfoundland song, music, dance, and traditional culture. Sources include biographical accounts of collectors and descriptions of specific projects undertaken by cultural institutions.


An article addressing problems with classifying repertoire (by both collectors and performers). The authors draw on examples from two Newfoundland communities to examine the relationship between collectors, performers, and audiences.


An account of several projects developed in Newfoundland to make archival audio recordings held in the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive more accessible to the public. The article addresses the different mediums used for transmission, relationships between communities, culture bearers, and the university, and feedback on the resulting projects.


MacEdward Leach compiled the earliest recorded collection of songs in Atlantic Canada. This collection also covered a much greater geographic and generic range as he included local compositions, as well as American, English, Scottish, and Irish songs. This article describes the archival and pedagogical aims and challenges of creating the “MacEdward Leach and the Songs of Atlantic Canada” website.

Guigné, Anna Kearney. 2007. “‘The Folklore Treasure there is Astounding’: Reappraising Margaret Sargent McTaggart’s Contribution to the Documentation of Newfoundland Folksong at Mid-Century.” Ethnologies 29(1–2). DOI 10.7202/018749ar

A critical examination of the influence of Margaret Sargent McTaggart on the collection of Newfoundland folksongs and the study of folklore in Canada. McTaggart was the first female musicologist employed by the National Museum of Canada and responsible for launching the first Canadian-funded research on Newfoundland folksong traditions.


A re-examination of the song collecting activities of Maud Karpeles in Newfoundland (1929–30). This account was prompted by the discovery of 41 photos taken by Karpeles and preserved at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in London. The images provide a context and supplements to other field data, including diaries, music notebooks, and song index.
Newfoundland songsters, tune books & collections

Published songsters, tune books, and collections are important influences on the repertoires of Newfoundlanders, not least on the songs sung by the people of the Cape Shore. Songsters published and disseminated early in the 20th century by the likes of John Burke and Gerald S Doyle frequently were available in outport homes, and many of the conversations captured in Aidan O’Hara’s field recordings make reference to learning songs from books. This list includes the songsters, collections, and people who have left lasting marks on Newfoundland song and music traditions.


Johnny Burke (1851–1930), also known as the Bard of Prescott Street, compiled many such songsters in addition to writing a number of well-known Newfoundland ballads (e.g., “The Night Paddy Murphy Died,” “Cod Liver Oil,” and “The Valley of Kilbride”). Other songsters include Burke’s Newfoundland Ballads (1912), The Allies Patriotic War Songster (1917), Burke’s Xmas Songster (1920), An Irish Songster (1922), Burke’s Popular Songs (1929).


The editor writes in the introduction, “This book is an impression. It is not simply a songbook, or a photo album, or a biography, or a documentary. By not being simply one or the other it runs the risk of being a little bit of each and not enough, or too much, of either” (1977:8). Comprising notated tunes, song words, photos, biographies, and impressionistic accounts of performances, this book is an account of a band (Denis Ryan of Co Tipperary, Fergus O’Byrne of North Dublin, and Dermot O’Reilly of Drimnagh, Dublin) that was influential in the Newfoundland folk revival of the 1970s and an example of the strong cultural connections between Newfoundland and Ireland.


Gerald S. Doyle (1892–1956) was a businessman and folksong collector. He (and his descendants) published five editions of this song book, all containing songs that he collected during visits to Newfoundland’s remote outport communities. The songsters were freely available. Song collector Kenneth Peacock asserted that Doyle was “more responsible than anyone else for making the general public aware of Newfoundland songs.”


A collection of songs gathered from throughout Canada, including several songs from Newfoundland. Though Edith Fowke’s (1913–1996) collecting efforts did not focus on
Newfoundland, she was part of the same “golden age” of folksong collecting that brought the likes of MacEdward Leach and Kenneth Peacock to Newfoundland.


Based on collector Kenneth Peacock’s field recordings, this book makes available the song that were omitted from Peacock’s three volume Songs of the Newfoundland Outports (1965). Each song is fully transcribed with accompanying notation, details of collection, Roud number, and notes on song origins.


Collected during the 1920s and early 1930s, this collection of songs is considered the first academic study of Newfoundland traditional song. New Yorker Elisabeth Bristol Greenleaf (1895–1980) first came to Newfoundland as a teacher. With the support of Vassar College, she hired Grace Yarrow Mansfield to help record and transcribe songs collected during their fieldwork.


British collector Maud Karpeles (1885–1976) made two separate trips to Newfoundland in 1929 and 1930, approximately contemporary with the collecting trips made by Greenleaf and Mansfield. The trip had originally been planned by Cecil Sharpe, who believed that Newfoundland, Britain’s oldest colony, must surely be a repository for folksongs of English origin. Karpeles completed the collecting trip after Sharpe’s death. She published the results of her collecting in two volumes with piano accompaniments (1934). Almost 40 years later she released a collection of 150 songs, with melodies and words only.


MacEdward Leach (1897–1967) was among the most influential North American folklorists of the 20th century. Based at the University of Pennsylvania, he made four collecting trips to Atlantic Canada between 1950 and 1960. His Folk Ballads & Songs of the Lower Labrador Coast derives from his 1960 trip to the Labrador Coast. Variants of many of the songs recorded by Aidan O’Hara are included in this collection. The Ballad Book, Leach’s magnum opus, was certainly influenced by his collecting work in Newfoundland though is constructed as a history and account of English-language balladry (rather than an account of ballads sung in a particular region).


This collection of songs claims the distinction of being the ‘first major collection of Newfoundland folksongs compiled and edited by native Newfoundlanders’: Genevieve Lehr, a folklorist trained at Memorial University of Newfoundland, and Anita Best, a folk singer and collector. The collection include several songs collected from the same people who feature on Aidan O’Hara’s recordings.

Collected by folk revival singer Pamela Morgan (b. 1957), this song book includes arrangements of 12 traditional Newfoundland songs gathered from communities throughout Newfoundland. One of the songs, 'A Sailor's Trade,' comes from the singing of Caroline Brennan of Ship Cove, Placentia Bay. Caroline’s songs, stories, and accounts of language are a significant part of the recordings featured in this exhibition.

Murphy, James. [1895]1903. The Songs and Ballads of Terra Nova. St John’s, NL: Evening Telegram.

James Murphy (1868–1931) published a series of such songsters between 1902 and 1925, with titles including Songs of Our Land (1904), Murphy’s Sealers Song Book (1905), Coronation Song Book of Newfoundland (1911), Old Songs (1912), Songs of Newfoundland by Various Authors (1917), Songs Their Fathers Sung, For Fishermen, Old-Time Ditties (1923), Songs Sung by Old Time Sealers of Many Years Ago (1925).


Between 1951 and 1961, Peacock collected 766 songs from singers in thirty-eight communities representing the province’s anglophone, francophone, and Scottish traditions—the majority of which are published in this three volume series. Peacock’s collection is highly regarded by singers of Newfoundland song, and well noted by many researchers for its breadth and scope.


A collection of 28 dance tunes transcribed in standard staff notation as well as accordion tablature. While the collection includes a few well-known tunes (e.g., 'Mussels in the Corner') the majority are less commonly heard. All tunes are accompanied by a note about where they were collected and context for performance.


Collections of contemporary and traditional Newfoundland song, set with piano accompaniment and guitar tablature.

Music, song, dance, and oral traditions of Newfoundland

Newfoundland and Labrador’s unique history, geography, and culture are widely researched and topics of prolific publication. The sources listed here are just those that have particular relevance to discussion of Irish-Newfoundland connections and the music, song, and dance of Newfoundland. Though a range of recent and older scholarship is included, there is emphasis on more recent publications.


An interview with teacher, archivist, and singer, Anita Best. The interview focuses on Anita’s memories of her father-in-law, storyteller Pius Power from Clattice Harbour and Southeast Bight.


During the late 1960s and 1970s, Scottish folklorist Margaret Bennett was a student in Newfoundland, where she studied the culture and language retention of Scottish speakers in the Codroy Valley. Her publications analyse these connections, exploring how cultures adapt in diasporic contexts. Jerome Just One More Song! is based on recording collected in partnership with Kenneth Goldstein and elaborates how Jerome Downey, a Newfoundlander of Irish descent, and his family lived and preserved aspects of Irish traditions in the midst of a community of with Scotch, French, English, and Mi'Kmaq influences.


An article about the boundaries that define traditional Newfoundland music and musicianship, focusing on relationships between place, tradition, and history.


The McNulty Family were a trio Irish-American vaudeville performers who regularly toured in Newfoundland between 1930 and 1970 to promote the sale of their records. The popularity of this group left a lasting mark on song repertoires of Newfoundland.


Two songs, with notated melody and words, from the singing of Jack and Tom Kehoe.


Cox’s publications are based on fieldwork completed in Green’s Harbour and other Trinity Bay South communities, Newfoundland. His article in Canadian Folk Music, focuses on the role of the religion in folk culture by exploring the Christmas carolling traditions of an outport community dominated by United, Anglican, and Salvation Army Churches. Folk Music in a Newfoundland Outport is a more extensive study, based on the author’s postgraduate research. Cox’s accounts of outport culture in Newfoundland provide a counterpoint to that represented by Aidan O’Hara’s recordings; though there are similarities that mark the traditions and repertoire of the communities, Cox’s work focuses on an area primarily settled by the British and shaped by Protestant traditions.


This study addresses the ways in which traditional Newfoundland music has been constructed by the tourism industry. Everett compares perceptions of tourist interests offered by individuals working in the Newfoundland music industry with statistical data about non-resident visitors to the province.


A collection of essays written in honour of folklorist Herbert Halpert, who founded the Department of Folklore at Memorial University. The chapters in this festschrift cover a wide range of topics on the traditional cultures of North America and English-speaking Europe. "Forty Years Later: Maude Karpeles in Newfoundland" by Carole Henderson Carpenter, and Neil V Rosenberg’s chapters on Halpert himself are specifically relevant to the study of Newfoundland music and culture.


An article about the origins of Bob Dylan’s song “Belle Isle,” in which the author examines the song first, as a Newfoundland folk song and, second, as an Irish folk song.


A discussion of a selection of Newfoundland ballads from Kenneth Peacock’s Songs of Newfoundland Outports (1965). The author examines themes of travel and outings from the perspective of queer studies.


These articles explore Newfoundland song repertories. The 2004 article describes the possibilities for tracing connections between the song repertories found in 19th century Newfoundland outports and the four counties of the English West Country. The 2006 article examines the emergence of Newfoundland nationalist sentiment through early 20th century song collections (e.g., Gerald Doyle’s The Old Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland, Elisabeth Greenleaf’s Ballads and Sea Songs from Newfoundland, and Maud Karpeles’ Folk Songs from Newfoundland).


A study of the practice of “mumming”—or mummering, as it is more widely known in Newfoundland. This Christmas visiting tradition derives from British and Irish customs.


Harris Walsh’s research encompasses a variety of percussive dance styles found in Newfoundland, including set dancing, vernacular Newfoundland set dance, the Irish-Newfoundland style of step dance introduced by the Christian Brothers, and Irish step dance. Her articles address contexts of practice, issues of cultural identity, and the “Irishness” of the styles.


An analysis of the popular Newfoundland song, ‘The Star of Logy Bay,’ that weighs claims made by family members that it was originally composed by Newfoundland song-maker, Mark Walker (1846–1924).


An article that uses notated musical examples to explore the ‘Irishness’ of Newfoundland music. Newfoundland music, in reality, is a unique blend of Irish and English influences that has developed a ‘life of its own.’


An examination of how Newfoundland’s song traditions reflect its unique identity and ambivalent relationship to the rest of Canada.


This article explores the conventions of murder ballads as sung in Newfoundland, drawing on two songs (“Carolan Anderson” and “McCanning’s Hanging”) collected by Eric West in 1978 in the area of Placentia Bay that is just north of the Cape Shore.


In this monograph about the globalisation of Irish song traditions, a chapter-long case study of Irish songs in the Newfoundland explores historical connections and the adaptation of repertoire according to changing local conditions.


Bridget O’Connell’s research examines regional styles of Newfoundland fiddle playing.

Osborne’s research examines how traditional Newfoundland music, a style comprising English, Irish, Scottish, and French influences, as well as local compositions and media influences, has come to be perceived as inherently Irish.


This article provides an overview of the historical relationship between Newfoundland and Ireland, beginning with the fishermen and labourers who went out to Newfoundland from southeast Ireland during the 18th century. Ó hAllmhuráin provides a summary of the major published collections of songs, influential recordings—including those of the McNulty family and Ryan’s Fancy—and occasions for music and dancing.


A report on a research project focusing on sources of Newfoundland popular music. Defined as commercially performed, recorded, or printed music available to the listening public in Newfoundland, the goals of the project were to compile a discography of Newfoundland recording artists (Taft 1975) and interview professional and semi-professional Newfoundland musicians.

Quigley, Colin. 1985. Close to the Floor: Folk Dance in Newfoundland. Monograph Series No. 3. St John’s, NL: Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore & Language Publications.


Ethnochoreologist and -musicologist Colin Quigley’s research addresses two topics that relate to Newfoundland music and dance. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, he explores the ways in which unique characteristics of the Newfoundland environment and culture have influenced a dance tradition that historically derives from the dances of Britain and Ireland.

He also writes on the music and life of Port-au-Port fiddler Emile Benoit (1913–1992), a preeminent musician from French Newfoundland. Music from the Heart (1995), for example, includes transcripts from interviews, notated versions of Benoit’s tunes, and analysis of Benoit’s music and influence.


Riordon’s chapter on Newfoundland includes descriptive accounts of conversations with singers, collectors, and other cultural mediators, including Anita Best, Pamela Morgan, Chris Brookes, Helen Woodrow, and Agnes Walsh. The account of Agnes Walsh includes excerpts from a play she wrote about Patsy and Bride Judge, two of the singers featured in “A Grand Time,” and a description of conversations with Mike McGrath, another singer from the Cape Shore.

A case study of the Newfoundland ballad, “The Southern Cross.” The song tells the story of a wooden-hulled steamer than participated in the seal hunt every spring between 1901 and 1914, before being caught in a storm and sinking with all hands. Rogers explores the degree to which the song text reflects the actual events.


Proceedings from 2008 North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo), held at Memorial University in St John’s, NL. This volume brings together accounts of fiddle (and related traditions) from around the North Atlantic. The memorial note about the fiddling of Séamus Creagh (1946–2009) written by Matt Cranitch, and Evelyn Osborne’s chapter, titled “Crossing Over through the Recording Studio: The Island to Island: Traditional Music from Ireland and Newfoundland CD Project” (pp. 47–67), both address the musical relationship between Ireland and Newfoundland.


Proceedings from the 2010 North Atlantic Fiddle Convention, held in Aberdeen, Scotland. This volume brings together accounts of fiddle (and related traditions, including dance) from around the North Atlantic. Samantha Breslin’s chapter on Irish tunes played in Newfoundland sessions focuses on how repertoire is localised by performers.


Written by Newfoundland cellist and fiddler, this two-part article identifies and describes four fiddle styles performed in Newfoundland.


A chapter on the status of traditional music in Newfoundland’s education policy points to historical connections between Newfoundland and Ireland, including initial migration but also more recent policy moves and efforts at cultural bridging. She observes that while Irish education policy creates a formalised space for the traditional arts, Newfoundland has not yet followed suit and explores the structural distinctions between these two contexts.

Historian and radio scholar Jeff A Webb’s research addresses the influence of radio in Newfoundland. While his book, The Voice of Newfoundland, focuses more on the broadcast of news and interviews, he does include a chapter on music. His “Repertoire and Reception” article examines the influence of popular music on Newfoundland repertoire in the period immediately preceding the arrival of American troops and military bases in Newfoundland.

For wider ranging scholarship on Newfoundland and Labrador, consult:

- Newfoundland and Labrador Studies (http://www.mun.ca/nls/)
- The Centre for Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University Libraries (https://www.library.mun.ca/cns/)
- The Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) (https://www.mun.ca/folklore/research/munfla/)
- The Research Centre for Music, Media, and Place (MMaP) (https://www.mun.ca/mmap/research_pub/back_on_track/index.php)
- The Centre for Newfoundland Studies at Waterford Institute of Technology (https://www.wit.ie/research/centres_and_groups/research_groups/business/centre_for_newfoundland_and_labrador_studies#tab=panel-1)

Several journals and magazines regularly publish articles relating to the music, song, dance, and oral traditions of Newfoundland. These include:

- Canadian Folk Music BULLETIN de musique folklorique (http://cfmb.icaap.org/archives.html)
- MUSICultures (https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/MC/issue/archive)
- Canadian Folk Music / Musique folklorique canadienne (http://www.canfolkmusic.ca/index.php/cfmb/issue/archive)
- Newfoundland and Labrador Studies (http://www.mun.ca/nls/toc/)

Stories, plays, and other literature

Elements of tradition often are reflected in the work of contemporary artists, writer, musicians, playwrights, and even publicists. This list is a sampling of some materials that offer responses and reflections on Newfoundland’s oral history and culture.

Anonymous. 1977. “Dr. Wilgus’ Lecture, or, How They Do It In Ireland.” Promotional Materials. St John’s, NL.

A broadside ballad, printed as promotional material for a lecture by song scholar DK Wilgus Memorial University of Newfoundland on 21 September 1977. Donated to ITMA by Aidan O’Hara.

———. N.d. “The Bard of Prescott Street, or, Who’s in the Cast?” Promotional Materials. St John’s, NL.

A broadside ballad, printed as promotional material for a performance by a mummers group and photography exhibition at an unspecified location in St John’s, NL. The musicians included John Burke, Ron Hynes, Bob Joy, AH Allen, Charles Hutton, and RA Browne. Donated to ITMA by Aidan O’Hara.


A hand-illustrated picture book of singer Bud Davidge’s 1973 ‘The mummer’s song.’ The song describes a centuries old tradition of mummering that was in danger of dying out in Newfoundland. Since its initial release, the practice of mummering in Newfoundland has undergone a revival and is now celebrated in a St John’s based festival during December.

A memoir about a Newfoundland woman’s life in music, encompassing experiences as a convent girl in a choir, interests in American popular music, and Newfoundland’s traditional music.


An anthology of poetry by emerging poets from Newfoundland and Ireland. The poems are organised thematically, enabling continuities and distinctions in perspective to emerge from the overarching narrative of the anthology.


A book of biographies of Newfoundlanders who influenced the province’s politics, industries, and culture in a variety of ways, including one of the singers from “A Grand Time”: Bride Judge of Patrick’s Cove. Each portrait was originally published in the Toronto-based national newspaper, The Globe and Mail.


A collection of poems about Ireland and Newfoundland, dealing with themes of culture, nature, and justice.


A collection of plays written for the Tramore Theatre, a community-based arts organization founded for the promotion of the Cape Shore’s oral history and cultural traditions.

**Irish-language resources**

With a few notable exceptions, much of the Irish-language literature on the connections between Ireland and Newfoundland addresses Donnchadh Ruadh MacConmara (d. ca. 1814), an Irish priest and schoolmaster who visited Newfoundland in 1745. His poetry documents the early years of migration that brought Irish men and women out from southeast Ireland to settle in Newfoundland.


This academic study is an historical overview of the presence of the Irish language in Canada. Though widely spoken initially, after the Famine the Irish language went into decline among Irish immigrants and had largely died out in Canada by 1900. Illustrated with maps, colour images, song and poem texts, and statistics, this book provides a broad overview of the status of the language in Canada generally, with some reference to Newfoundland.


Unpublished resources & ITMA field recordings

Theses, dissertations, academic studies, and presentations relating to the song, music, and oral traditions. Due to the difficulties of sourcing unpublished manuscripts or live presentations, this list emphasises field recordings from the ITMA Collection.


_A presentation about Bennett’s fieldwork in the remote outports of southwest Newfoundland, focusing on Scottish-speaking communities and their traditions (audio only)._  


_A presentation about Bennett’s fieldwork in the remote outports of southwest Newfoundland, focusing on Scottish-speaking communities and their traditions (audio and video)._  


_An ethnographic study of the Irish influences on the speech patterns of Newfoundland’s Southern Shore, the cape to the east of the Cape Shore. This region was an enclave of Irish settlement in Newfoundland, resulting in the preservation of customs, culture, and speech patterns that demonstrate clear Irish origins._


_A thesis that surveys 100 CD recordings of traditional music produced in Atlantic Canada between 1986 and 2002. The author discusses how recordings of traditional Scottish and Irish music from the region are used to construct the traditional culture of Atlantic Canada._


_A conference programme for a conference focusing on the music and oral traditions of the North Atlantic, with articles contributed by Liz Carroll and John Doyle, Matt Cranitch, Séamus Creagh, Alasdair Fraser, and Natalie Haas._


_A presentation examining the changing role of musicians in the outport communities of Newfoundland._

Osborne, Evelyn. 2003. “ ‘We Never Had a Bed Like That for a Violin! We Had a Bag!’ Exploring Fiddlers and Dance Music in Newfoundland: Red Cliff, Bonavista Bay and Bay de Verde, Conception Bay.” MA thesis, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON.


Osborne’s research explores Newfoundland fiddle styles and dance music, as well as more broadly addressing the mediation of a variety of Newfoundland musics as “Irish.” Her 2012 presentation at NAFCo, featured in an ITMA field recording, examines the role of the McNulty Family as agents of cultural exchange between Ireland, Newfoundland, and New York.

Preston, Virginia. 1977 (May). “‘The Old Ways are Goin’—They’re Goin’ Fast’: Some People of the Newfoundland Outports and their Songs.” BA thesis, Marlboro College, Vermont, USA.

A chapter from a longer thesis about the songs and people of outport Newfoundland. This chapter is a case study of Caroline Brennan of Ship Cove, Placentia Bay, Newfoundland—a woman whose songs and stories feature prominently in Aidan O’Hara’s collection. Indeed, Aidan O’Hara arranged the initial meeting between Preston and Brennan. The case study includes oral history, song transcriptions, images, and analysis.


A presentation on the status of traditional music in Newfoundland’s education policy. This presentation was later published as part of the conference proceedings, Crosbhealach an Cheoil (see Trew 2013).


A booklet including melody and lyric transcripts for 12 songs from the Aidan O’Hara Collection at ITMA. Songs include: “Aspell and Carter,” “Benecia Boy and Morrissey,” “The Blackwaterside,” “County Tyrone,” “Crockeryware,” “The Faithful Sailorboy,” “Old Leather Britches,” “The Scolding Wife,” “Paddy in New York,” “There’s Bound to be a Row,” and “Thomas Trim.” Also includes notes on the songs, singers, and collector.

Commercial recordings in the ITMA Collection

Newfoundland singers and musicians are prolific in their output—wonderful for the vitality of the arts in Newfoundland, but challenging when it comes to compiling a comprehensive list of recordings. This list is limited to those recordings that are available from ITMA as of June 2018. A more comprehensive discography of more than 3,100 Newfoundland-related recordings is available from Memorial University’s Centre for Newfoundland Studies (https://www.library.mun.ca/cns/discography/).


———. 1985. *After the Tempest*. Performed by Pamela Morgan, Dave Panting, Geoff Butler, Derek Pelley, Noel Dinn. Produced by Tom Treumth. Celtic Music CM 023. 1 LP.


Na Fianna (band). *The Cliffs of Baccalieu*. Produced by Chuck Owens. Martone MARS11. 1 SP.


This CD features recordings from the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive. This wide ranging collection includes examples from the provinces different linguistic traditions, as well as a range of performance genres. The accompanying booklet provides transcriptions (notations and words) based on the recordings, as well as contextual notes about the tracks.


Stephanie Nash is the granddaughter of Cape Shore singer, Frankie Nash.


———. 1981. *Dance around This One*. Boot Records BOS 7217. 1 LP.


———. N.d. *Dark Island*. Performed by Fergus O'Byrne, Dermot O'Reilly, Denis Ryan. Musikelt MK7002. 1 LP.

———. N.d. *Ryan’s Fancy Live!*. Performed by Fergus O’Byrne, Dermot O'Reilly, Denis Ryan. Engineered by Al Feeney. Audat 477–9085. 1 LP.


**Aidan O’Hara**

Aidan O’Hara has played an important role in the preservation and transmission of Newfoundland song, music, dance, and culture over his lifetime. His publications, broadcasts, films, and presentations reflect this contribution. But he is a man of wide-ranging interests.

Aidan spent his career as a broadcaster, making it difficult to list every radio programme in which he was involved. He’s also a regular contributor to several journals and magazines—including *Teabhtha* (the Co Longford Historical Society journal), *The Donegal Annual* (the Co Donegal Historical Society journal), *The Knocklyon Historical Society Journal*, and *Irish Music Magazine*—as a book reviewer and writer on historical subjects.

**Newfoundland**


*This 26 minute television documentary recounts the history of the many thousands of Irish who emigrated from the area within a 40 miles radius of Waterford, settling on the shores of Newfoundland during the 18th and 19th centuries.*

This 26 minute television documentary focuses on the religious tensions that marked social and political life in 19th century Newfoundland. The situation in Newfoundland paralleled that found in Ireland with an English Protestant elite, Irish Catholics who had a troubled relationship with British rule, enactment of Penal Laws, the presence of the Orange Order, and sectarian riots and murders. While sectarian tensions persisted in Ireland into the 20th and 21st centuries, they were largely resolved in Newfoundland in 1880 through a political device known as the Tripartite Arrangement.


This approximately 50 minute-long award-winning documentary features many of the same singers, musicians, and dancers as ‘A Grand Time.’ Produced in partnership with Radharc Films, it was RTÉ’s 1981 entry into the Golden Harp Festival. Scenes from the documentary subsequently appeared in the MacNeil-Lehrer and BBC co-production, The Story of English (1986, episode 6).

O’Hara, Aidan. N.d. Field recording of a lecture “The Songs of Newfoundland.” Folk Music Society of Ireland. S.l. 60 minutes.

A field recording of a lecture given by Aidan O’Hara about the folk songs of Newfoundland, featuring recordings collected on the Cape Shore from John Joe English, Gerald Campbell, Patsy Judge, Mick Nash, and Denis McGrath.


This brief article addresses sectarian and cultural divides that existed in Newfoundland during the 19th century through an account of an attempted rebellion by the United Irish.


Aidan O’Hara’s award-winning book about the Irish in Newfoundland. It traces the history of migration and settlement of mainly southeast-Irish to Newfoundland during the pre-famine era, addressing issues of cultural retention and adaptation with particular emphasis on the persistence of Irish language words in Newfoundland dialect. The second part of the book focuses on the music and culture of the Cape Shore, drawing on the same source materials that are featured in ‘A Grand Time.’ Na Gaeil i dTalamh an Éisc won the Oireachtas ‘97 literary award for a work in prose, and was nominated for The Irish Times Literature Prize in 1999 for a work in the Irish language.


In 1981, the Radharc documentary, The Forgotten Irish, was RTÉ’s entry into the Golden Harp Festival, an international television festival. This booklet appears to have been created to accompany the entry. It provides details of production, history of the featured songs, and a full transcript of the documentary.

Other publications, broadcasts, and recordings


While living in Ottawa, Canada, Aidan was serendipitously introduced to the Mayo songstress, Delia Murphy. Their encounter was the inspiration for this book. It featured on RTÉ’s Book on One in May 2005.

Part of Geography Publications’ counties of Ireland series, each chapter is contributed by a specialist in history, geography, archaeology, folklore, literary history, and/or politics. Aidan O’Hara’s chapter addresses emigration from the county.


This short booklet explores the linguistic, cultural, and historical connections between Donegal and the Hebrides. Text is supplemented with photos, maps, and detailed footnotes.


Recordings for a radio broadcast featuring Aidan and Joyce O’Hara singing and playing guitar.


Two collections of songs in Irish for children.