

Dan Furey (1909-1993)

Dancer and Musician, Dan Furey was born in England in September 1909. His father was from Lackyle, Labasheeda and his mother was English, of Scottish origin. While Dan was still a child the family moved back to the family home in Lackyle, County Clare. Some years later three of Dan's siblings emigrated to America and the remaining two left for England. Dan remained on the family farm, some two miles from Labasheeda.



Dancing was a very popular social pastime in many parts of rural Ireland at that time, especially at times of emigration or for those returning home on holidays. Both of his parents loved dancing and his mother also played the piano. Dances regularly took place in the Furey household where various types of sets were danced, The Plain Set, The Reel Set and sometimes The Paris Set. Step-dancing, Four-hand Reels and Two-hand dances were also enjoyed. Dan learned to play the fiddle and had his own distinctive style of playing. He also played the melodeon and the concertina.

Dan's interest in dancing started from about the age of six or seven. His brother George taught him his first steps and he picked up many others in his own locality, and, of course, he learned a lot from his parents. He gradually built up a selection of Sets, Step-dances and Ceili dances. While visiting his brother in England he attended dance classes in Kilburn under the direction of Maurice O'Connor, a dancing master who was originally from Cork.

When he was in his twenties he was asked to give private step-dancing lessons to the daughter of Garda Vesey and thus began his teaching career. Soon he was teaching in several schools in the vicinity, making the journey by bicycle in all kinds of weather and carrying his fiddle as he went. Eventually, as requests for classes from further afield were made, he bought a car and travelled to Doonbeg, Kilkee, Carrigaholt etc. In some areas he taught for over thirty years.

In the 1980s Dan travelled outside of Clare to teach and he became a regular visitor to Belfast, Galway and London. He also travelled to Chicago several times. Since the death of his father in 1958 Dan lived alone in Lackyle but a steady stream of people from various countries visited him there. Dan, together with his life-long friend, James Keane, contributed to the book *Set Dances of Ireland*, written by Larry Lynch. In 1990 Dan and James conducted very successful classes at the Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy.

Dan Furey died in August, 1993. He is buried with his parents in Killofin cemetery, approximately one mile from his house. In September 1995 the first "Dan Furey weekend" took place. It was organised by local people as a tribute to Dan, to music, and to dancing.