

"AN OLD FRIEND": EDDIE BUTCHER

by Hugh Shields

(An appreciation of the Magilligan, co Derry, singer Eddie Butcher who died on 8
September 1980)

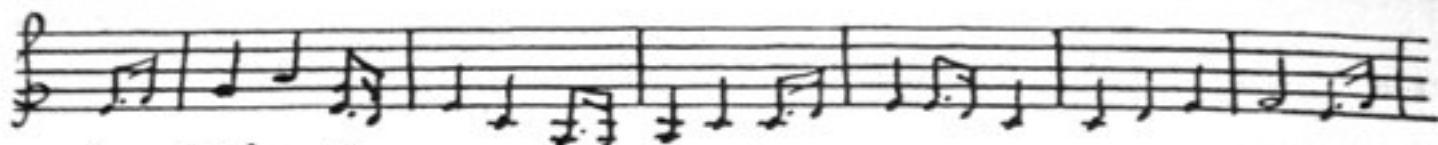
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"A N O L D F R I E N D" : E D D I E B U T C H E R

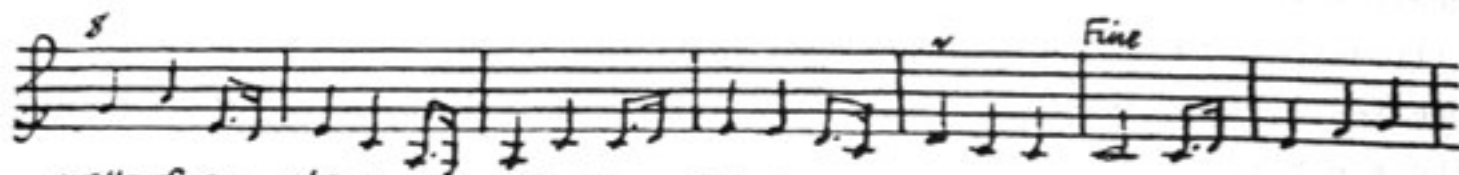
The death of Eddie Butcher on 8 September has robbed us of the finest folk singer I have had for a friend, and of a man of great warmth and humanity. Eddie first introduced me to traditional singing when twenty-seven years ago we had our first meeting. Among the sixty-odd songs I wrote down from him in those early days, when paper and pencil were all the aids I knew, the one here given is a fit memorial.

The word to describe him rhymes with his name: steady. A dependable character if there was one, as steady as the 'Rock' below which he lived his life; full of obstinate ideas of his own, and loving to be praised; deeply imbued with his own culture and only really happy in its familiar surroundings. It was a compliment to the Society that he made himself so much at home when he sang at Essex St, Dublin, in September 1975.

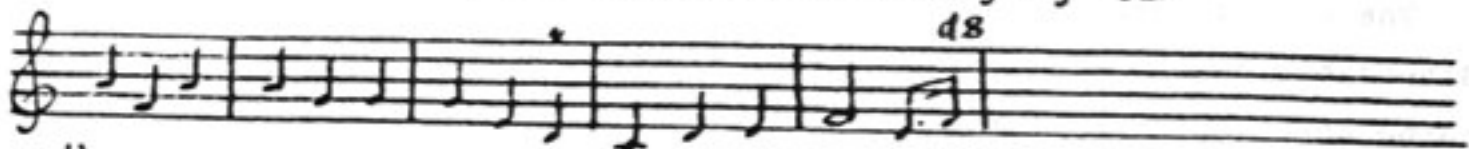
Eddie was born in 1900 in the upper lands of Magilligan, co Derry, one of a family of ten who were mostly singers and who learned songs from the bountiful source of their father. In the thirties he married Gracie Carr and they had a family of two boys and three girls, all still living in the district. Though not given to travel he was persuaded on three occasions to visit Dublin, and once Dundalk (he made a song about that). He sang on radio and records - one EP and three LPs - and makes the major contribution of songs and lore to a book on folk singing in Magilligan which I am just now proof-reading. Unhappily he won't see it, to applaud or to reprove. My last memory of him remains the phone call he made on the night before he died, to chat about a recent radio programme which featured some of his own numerous compositions.



One evening for my recreation So careless as I did stray By the



walls of an old ancient abbey it bein in the sweet month of May where the breeze with
 mantle so green was my lover And the shamrock & daisy my bed. fa-



figuever hanging to slumber! laid down my head where the

But when I arose from my slumber
 A hermit to me did appear,
 His grey hair hung down without number
 He spoke & bid me never fear:
 Sayin arise let us all be united
 For I am a brother depend,
 Arise without more salutation
 And never despise an ould friend.

I arose without more salutation
 Straightway then with him I did go
 For the robes that he wore gave me reason
 For to prove that he was not a foe;
 I was doubtful but I made free to ask him,
 And hoped that it would not offend,
 Sayin How do you know we are brethren,
 Or what do you mean by an ould friend?

Kind sir, sure my cause it is legal
 I was sent by the powers above,
 St. Patrick he left the foundation,
 For to join us in brotherly love.
 And I a true knight of his banner,
 Its cause I will always defend,
 If you read in the annuals of scripture
 You will never despise an ould friend.

As soon as he finished those vases
 His harp on his shoulder he threw
 We kindly shook hands and then parted
 Kind sir I must bid you adieu.
 Then a carriage with light horses ascended
 The angels around did attend.
 And the last words he spoke at our parting
 Was to never despise an ould friend.

Eddie Butcher will be remembered with affection by many who have learned from him, and not only songs. The education he bestowed was an experience; it is not obtainable from print, media, or any learned institution.

Hugh Shields

THANKS TO OUR FIRST TREASURER

Tom Munnelly has been Hon. Treasurer of the Society since it began; for over nine years he has performed efficiently and punctually a function more demanding than our slender resources might lead one to expect. Now resident in Clare, he has found liaison inconvenient in view of our Dublin focus. While retiring as Treasurer, he remains a member of the committee. We thank him for his service in the former function