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HARP PERSPECTIVES

my regards to the
guardian of generosity

FEARGAL MAC AMHLAOIBH

Welcome to *Harp Perspectives*, Cruit Éireann, Harp Ireland's online journal. One of our strategic aims is to establish thought leadership across the harp sector by building up a body of thinking about the harp and harping through a historical and contemporary lens.

Harp Perspectives is a conversation about harping and features key informants, harpers and non-harpers, sharing their authentic views and ideas. We believe that this combination of scholarly research and personal insights will highlight the harping legacy inherited from our tradition bearers and help forge a contemporary harping identity, secure in its understanding of its origin and how it wishes to evolve.

In our November edition, we welcome a voice from the southwest where Feargal Mac Amhlaobh narrates the story of Piaras Ferriter, iconic Gaelic poet and accomplished harper from West Kerry. He transcribes the poem Piaras wrote in praise of a harp he received as a gift from fellow local harper Éamonn mac Domhnaill Mhic an Daill, about 1640. Feargal describes the repression suffered by harpers and poets in the early 1600s under the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1 who ordered her representatives in Ireland “to hang the harpers, wherever found, and destroy their instruments”.

In the coming months, we will be welcoming more voices to the conversation and provide new perspectives on current and future harp directions.

Our thanks to each of our contributors for their willingness to add their voices. Their contributions will no doubt enrich our thinking.

Aibhlín McCrann and Eithne Benson

Editors

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MY REGARDS TO THE GUARDIAN OF GENEROSITY

Feargal Mac Amhlaoibh

Ballyferriter is located in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht of West Kerry, the village being named after the Norman clan of Ferriter which controlled that area from the late 13th century up to the early 17th century. As was the case with most of the Norman settlers, they became “more Irish than the Irish themselves”, and were recognised by the native Irish peasantry and, indeed, by the new English invaders, as the equals of Gaelic chieftains.

Piarras was, perhaps, the most notable of the Ferriters, not only as a leader in the Desmond Rebellion of 1641, but as a poet and accomplished harper. He was born in 1600, the son of Éamonn, and while he lived through turbulent times, he managed to acquire a very complete classical education, was literate in English and Latin, but also in his native Irish, in which he excelled as a poet. Pádraig Ó Duinnín (of Dictionary fame) has this to say:

FEAR LÉANNTA DO B'EA PIARRAS. NÍ FIOS DÚINN ANOIS CÁ FUAIR SÉ A CUIT LÉINN
– AN I SCIARRAÍ É, NÓ Ó ROINN NA HEORPA NÓ SAN MÐREATAIN. NÍL AMHRAS,
ÁFAĆ, NÁ SUR TUIS SÉ CÚRSAÍ NA FÍLIÓCTA I NÐAEITSE, CÚRSAÍ NA
SEAN-FÍLIÓCTA IS CÚRSAÍ NA NUA-FÍLIÓCTA. DO THUIS SÉ RIALAĆA AN DÁIN
DÓIRISH AÐUS RIALAĆA AN AMHRÁIN AÐUS CAOINTE.¹

Piarras was an educated man. We don't know where he acquired his education – in Kerry, on the Continent of Europe or in Britain. There is no doubt, however, that he understood the systems of poetry in Irish, the old poetic style and the new. He knew the rules of the syllabic poem and those of the song and lament.

Poetry composition went hand-in-hand with harp-playing at that time, both crafts being mutually complimentary and highly regarded among the entire population.

¹ *Dánta Phiaraís Feiritéir*, Pádraig Ó Duinnín, Oifig Díolta Foilseacháin an Rialtais, (B.Á.C., 1934) 45.

As a result harpers were perceived as a threat by the invaders, causing Elizabeth I to order her representatives in Ireland in 1603 “to hang the harpers, wherever found, and destroy their instruments”.²



Figure 1. The military seat of the Ferriter Family was Dun Point, site of fortifications dating to the Bronze Age. By the 1400s, a stout tower house, called Caisleán an Fheirtéaraigh (Ferriter’s Castle) had been erected. It is this structure that exists in a fragmentary state today.

The role of the harp in Ireland stretches back through recorded history and legend to before the coming of Christ. In spite of its near demise in the late-18th century, recent years have seen a revival and renewal of its role as our noblest instrument, and it was rightly honoured as the national symbol of the new independent state at its foundation.

Historical references to the harp are often accidental. It was simply part and parcel of the social and cultural life of the people. Around the time when the Ferriters were at the height of their reign in the West Kerry area, there is an account of a visit to Dingle by George Erle of Cumberland on his voyage to the Azores in 1589, written by his mathematician and engineer Edward Wright:

So soone as we had ankered here [Ventrie haven] my Lord went forthwith to shoare, and brought presently fresh water and fresh victuals, as Muttons, pigges, hennes, &c. to refresh his company withall. Notwithstanding himselfe

² *The story of the harp*, W.H.Grattan Flood (London 1905) 28. See Addendum page 15: Note from author.

had lately bene very weake, and tasted of the same extremitie that his Company did: For in the time of our former want, having a little fresh water left him remaining in a pot, in the night it was broken, and the water drunke and dried up. Soone after the sicke and wounded men were carried to the next principall Towne, called Dingena cush, being about three miles distant from the foresaide haven, where our shippe roade, to the Eastwards, that there they might be the better refreshed, and had the Chirurgians dayly to attend upon them. Here we wel refreshed our selves whilst the Irish harpe sounded sweetely in our eares, and here we, who for the former extremities were in maner halfe dead, had our lives (as it were) restored unto us againe.³

Not far from Dingle, off the same route that Cumberland took from Ventry, is Ballymacadoyle (*recte* Baile Mhic an Daill, “Dall” being the appendage frequently applied to harpers as many were blind due to the ravages of smallpox) where also lived at this time a family of harpers and harp makers. It seems the head of the family was blind and they became known as the Macadoyles (Mac a’ Daill). An inquisition report of 1584 refers to the place as “Harperstowne”, and the family was listed as having been “pardoned” in 1601 Elizabethan fiants⁴ which included “Carrol m’Edeill, his son Donell m’Edeill, Edmund m’Edeill, his son, Donell oge m’Edm m’Edeill, Conogher m’Edeill”.⁵

No pardons to harpers appear on record during the years intervening between 1586 and 1601. During the latter year Her Majesty and her Lord Deputies in Ireland must have been in a particularly generous mood, for besides clemency extended to a large number of pipers, no less than eleven harpers were pardoned.⁶

It is clear that a strong bond of friendship existed between the Mac a’ Daill family and the Ferriters, particularly in later years with Piaras as local chieftain and a fellow-harper. Piaras was a prolific poet, dealing with the many aspects of his life – conflict, love, peace, gratitude, praise. Many of these poems would be up to 50 quatrains long and are likely to have been accompanied by him on the harp as was the tradition.

3 *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1852), 139-140. Royal Society of Antiquaries, (63 Merrion Square, Dublin).

4 A fient was a writ directed to the Irish Chancery mandating the issue of letters patent under the Great Seal of Ireland dealing with matters from appointments to high office to grants of pardons to the humblest of the native Irish.

5 *Triocho-Céad Chorca Dhuibhne*, Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha (An Seabhac) Oifig Foilseacháin an Rialtais (BÁC 1939)

6 *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, Francis O’Neill (Chicago 1913; republished EP Publishing, UK 1973), 26.

τᾶ ἴος Ἀσαῖνν σο μαῖτῃ σο ραῖβη οὐῖλ ἰ ῖσεολ, σο μόρῖνór ἰ ῖσεολ να
CRUIṬE, Ἀῖ Πῖαῖας, Ἀῖῖῖῖῖ σο ραῖḃ μεᾶς Ἀῖῖε Ἀῖ Ἰοῖῖῖῖ Ḇᾶῖῖ, ῖεᾶῖ ḆḆ Ἰᾶῖῖῖ
ῖeᾶ ῖῖῖ. Ἀῖῖῖῖῖ τᾶ ἴος Ἀσαῖνν ῖῖῖῖ Ḇῖῖῖῖῖ CRUIṬ Ἀῖῖῖ ... Ἀῖῖῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖῖᾶᾶᾶ
SCOῖῖῖῖῖ ῖῖ Ḇῖᾶ Ḇῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖ
CRUIṬE Ἀῖῖῖῖ Ἀῖ ῖῖ Ἀ Ḇῖῖῖῖ ῖᾶῖῖῖ.

We know well that Piaras had a great love for music, especially the music of the harp; that he highly regarded Nioclás Dall, a man who lived in Piaras's time. And we know that he was presented with a harp ... and immediatly from his heart praises the harp and its benefactor in beautiful erudite verses of a syllabic poem.

That poem was **MOḆῖῖῖῖ Ḇ'Ἀῖῖῖῖῖ Ἀῖ Ḇῖῖῖῖῖῖῖῖ** (My regards to the guardian of generosity), acknowledging the harp he received as a gift from Éamonn mac Domhnaill Mhic an Daill, about 1640. The Nioclás Dall mentioned by Ó Duinnín and in the poem (verse 18) should not be confused with the Mac a' Daill family and is dealt with more fully below in the appendix.

Throughout the 26 quatrains of the poem, Piaras first praises Éamonn, and then refers to the harp as a “lady”, to the excellence of the instrument, her beauty, her sound, the effect she will have on those who hear her, the source of the materials in her making and the craftsmen involved.

It is clear from the poem that the harp was made in Magh Luirg, a medieval Irish kingdom located in modern-day Co. Roscommon. And it would seem that Éamonn had spent time there, where “he achieved learning and nobility” (verse 23 of poem), before returning home with the harp.

The entire poem in Irish is reproduced below, published by the Aubane Historical Society of Millstreet, Co. Cork, in 1999. This version, in old Gaelic script or *Cló Gaelach*, is that of Pádraig Ó Duinnín. It was published by the Government Publications in 1934, in which he edited some spellings, making such words more easily read and understood. Bearing in mind that this poem was composed more than four centuries ago, a word-for-word translation does not truly capture the poet's intentions. Ó Duinnín remarked that “Ferriter's language is very difficult and most interesting... There can be no doubt that he was very learned in Irish, and had a unique command

7 *Dánta Phiarais Feiritéir*, Pádraig Ó Duinnín. Ibid. 44-45.

of the language for poetical purposes”.⁸ The translation into English here by Pat Muldowney (with some further clarifications by the present author) “should be used as an aid to negotiating the poem in its original form... This leaves a considerable amount to the imagination and intelligence of the reader,”⁹ allowing for semantic shifts, morphology and the meaning of words often lost from the language.

In spite of all of the above, the passion and sincerity of Piaras in his appreciation of Éamonn’s gift of the harp and his admiration for the instrument are crystal clear.

1 ΜΟΨΕΔΗ Τ’ΑΛΤΡΟΜ ΑΝ ΟΙΡΒΕΙΡΤ,
 ΙΟΝΗΔΗΜ Α ΞΕΙΣ ΞΗΙΟΜ-ΟΙΡΘΙΡΕ,
 ΟΣΚ ΡΕΙΡΞΕ ΉΣΟ ΡΟΛΑ ΣΟΜ,
 ΡΟΞΑ ΞΑΨ ΚΕΙΡΘΕ ΑΝ ΨΕΑΡΘΟΣΟΜ.

My regards to the guardian of generosity,
 Beloved his customary way of noble deeds;
 It is the restraint of anger and blood, [*“bad blood”*]
 The greatest of all feats is that feat.

2 ΡΕ ΜΑΨ ΟΨΜΝΑΙΛΛ ΗΜΕ ΑΝ ΘΑΙΛΛ
 ΘΥΑΜ-ΘΕΑΝΑΨ ΒΡΙΞ Α ΤΨΑΞΡΑΙΜ,
 ΔΟΝΘΥΜΕ ΑΝ ΥΑΙΡΞΕ ΤΟ ΨΜ
 ΔΟΨΔΙΡΕ ΥΑΙΣΤΕ ΙΨ ΟΙΜΙΞ.

To the son of Donal, son of the Blind Man,
 Who always achieves virtue, I refer to
 The one person, of this time, who excels
 The protector of nobility and honour.

1 ΉΑΜΟΝΝ ΤΨΙΛΕΑΨ ΜΑΨ ΑΝ ΘΑΙΛΛ
 ΡΨΝ ΒΡΟΝΝΤΑΨ ΒΡΙΑΨΑΡ ΨΟΡΤΑΙΛΛ,
 ΘΑΙΤΑ ΙΨ ΤΕΑΞ-ΟΙΘΙΡ ΝΑ ΝΘΑΙΛΛ
 ΑΙΤΡΑ ΑΝ ΕΑΡ-ΟΙΜΙΞ ΉΑΜΟΝΝ.

8 *Dánta Phiarais Feiritéir*, Pat Muldowney, Aubane Historical Society (Millstreet, Co. Cork, 1999) 9.

9 *Ibid.*

Passionate Eamonn, son of the Blind,
Generous in secrets, mighty in words,
The pupil and good heir of the blind, [ancestors]
The nurturer of great virtue is Eamonn.

4 Ἰουάρας ὁ μάς μίς ἀν Ὀαίλλ
 Κλῆρσεὰς ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀλαίην,
 Σεοίτῳ βυάη ἔρεακ-λονὰς βυιῶε,
 εἰλτονὰς νυαῶ νεαῖνῶαίτῳε.

I received from the son of the son of the Blind
A beautiful and skillfully complete harp,
A lasting gem, speckled red and yellow,
Multi-toned, new, heavenly.

5 Ἄ κοῖμμαίτ τῳ ἐρῦιτ ἴεαημα
 ἠί Ἰουάιρ τραίτ ἠὰ τῖςεαρνα,
 Μόιρ-ἔρεατῳὰς ἐεαη ἀςυς ἐρεακ,
 ἀη βεαη ὀιρ-ἔεατῳὰς ἀίσεακ.

An equally good harp for playing
Was not obtained by leader or lord
Of great herds, obtained by fair means or foul,
The dependable gold-strung lady.

6 ἠί μαοιῶεαῖν ζῳ μέιτῳ μεαρβῳαίλλ,
 ἠί Ἰουάιρ εἰν-ρί τ'εἰρεαηηκῳαῖβ
 Ἄ κοῖμμῳρ ἠῶ Ἄ κοῖμμαίτ σῖη,
 Ἐοηηῶς ἠα ἔφοημαίτ ἔφριτῖρ.

It is not boasting (but) to the extent of my frenzy (of gratitude)
No king of the Irish received
So great or so good (an instrument),
Brown lady of the intense music.

7 ἠί Ἰουάιρ μαῖηη ἠὰ μῳς ἠέιτῳ,
 ἠί Ἰουάιρ λαῶςαῖρε Ἄ λειτῆιτῳ,

ní fúair Niall do nóct don míl,
ní fúair Brian ná Corc Cashel.

Maine or Mogh Néid did not receive (such),
Laoghaire did not receive its like, [These are various leaders]
Niall, who manifested excellence, did not,
Nor Brian nor Corc of Cashel [kings of Munster]

8 INSTRUIM OIRDEARC UISCE Fonn,
Éin-ionghantas fíadó fRéamhann,
DÉ DANNANAC DOIBHTE OIL
'S BÉ MANNANAC SCHOIRCE SCEIROIS.

Splendid instrument, getting to the profoundest depths of airs
The unique wonder of the wood Fréamhann, [a hill in Westmeath]
De Dannanian, magical, sweet, [fairy-like]
Artistic music of a woman of Manannan. [Manannán mac Lir]

9 IS BINN ALLHURDA AMRA
A SÉIMEANNA SEANAMLA,
AN ÉACT-FARRANAC FOIBHTE
ORÉACT-ALLANAC DEARSCOIBHTE.

They are sweet, exotic, wonderful,
Its lovable cries;
A vigorous, perfect achievement,
Artistic transcendent music.

10 EOCAR AN CEOL 'S A COMLA,
IONNUS TEAC NA HEALADONA,
AN ÉIREANNAIC SASTA SLAN,
SÉIMEANNAIC BLASTA BIAOMAR.

The key of music and its doorway,
The riches of the house of art,
The clever, precise Irishwoman!
Musical, tasty, sustaining!

11 ΔΟΣ ΠΙΟΡ-ΞΑΛΑΙΡ, ΠΙΡ ΞΟΝΤΑ,
 ΟΥΛΑΙΟ ΡΙΣ ΑΝ ΞΕΛΑΡ ΟΥΡΟΑ,
 ΑΝ ΘΕΟ-ΘΑΘΩ ΤΟΝ ΒΡΩΜ ΤΟ ΒΡΙΣ
 ΟΕΟΛ-ΑΘΩ ΑΝ ΟΙΛ 'Σ ΑΝ ΔΟΙΘΝΙΣ.

Those suffering from severe diseases, injured men,
 They find sleep with this noble harp;
 This spirited fairy goddess who defeats sorrow,
 The musical instrument of drinking and enjoyment.

12 ΠΥΑΙΡ ΟΥΡΡ Α ΟΥΑΔ-ΟΙΛΛ Ι ΝΑΟΙ
 ΙΣ ΛΑΜ-ΟΡΑΝΝ Ι ΛΙΟΣ ΣΕΑΝΤΡΑΟΙ
 ΟΥΕΑΣΤΑΟ ΜΑΟΤ-ΛΟΝΝ ΝΑ ΞΕΛΕΑΣ ΞΟΥΡΡ
 ΙΣ ΟΑΟΜ-ΟΟΜ Ο ΕΑΣ ΕΑΞΟΝΝ.

Its cross-tree was found in the forest of Magh nAoi, [in Roscommon]
 Its front pillar in Lios Seantraoi, [thought to be in Roscommon also]
 Lively, gently ardent instrument of rare features,
 And its beautiful body from Eas Éagonn. [at mouth of River Erne in Donegal]

13 ΠΥΑΙΡ ΜΑΟ ΣΙΤΘΟΥΙΛ ΤΑ ΣΥΘΕΑΟΤ,
 ΠΥΑΙΡ ΟΑΤΑΙ ΤΑ ΟΕΑΡΟΑΙΘΕΑΟΤ
 ΙΣ ΠΥΑΙΡ ΘΕΑΝΓΛΑΝ, ΜΟΡ ΑΝ ΜΟΘ,
 Α ΟΕΑΝΓΛΑΘ Τ'ΟΡ 'Σ Α ΗΙΟΝΝΛΟΘ.

Mac Sithdhuill accomplished its design, [other than their names,
 Cathal accomplished its construction, we have no information on
 And Beannghlan, great honour to him, these craftsmen]
 Its gold bindings and inlay.

14 ΜΑΙΤ Α ΗΟΙΡ-ΟΕΑΡΟ ΕΙΛΕ ΣΑΝ,
 ΠΑΡΤΟΛΟΝ ΜΟΡ ΜΑΟ ΟΑΤΑΙ,
 ΟΛΑΙΡΣΕΑΟ ΑΝ ΟΙΡ 'Σ ΝΑ Ν-ΑΛΛΑΝ,
 ΤΟΙΞ ΝΑΟ ΠΡΑΙΣΝΕΑΟ ΠΑΡΤΟΛΟΝ!

Good is that other goldsmith,
 Great Parthalon, son of Cathal;

The harp of gold and perfection,
Clearly Parthalon was not a brass-worker!

15 IS Í BA ÉLOS CIAN Ó SÓM,
 ΔΞ ΣΠΡΕΔΞΑΘ ΣΠΡΙΘΕ SAUL,
 ΞΟ CRUIT ΞCAOÍM ΞCAILM-ÉANNAC BPIOMN,
 ΞO SAILMÉAΘΛAC SAOR SÉISBÍOMN.

It was she that could be heard a long time ago
Encouraging the spirit of Saul
In gentle, calm-headed, fair form,
Singing psalms, free, sweet-voiced.

*[David in Saul's court
as his harpist:
See 1 Samuel 16:23]*

16 CIAN Ó ÓIAN-ÉOR ÚOLBH IS SANB
 AN ARMACAÉ, AN OIL-ΔΘB,
 ΘEAPÉ NEAM-ΘUB ΞAOIΘEALTA ΞLAN
 ΘEALLPAΘ ΘPAOIΘEACETA Δ ΘEALBΣAN.

An age since the hard plight of Dolbh and Sanbh
The tender lady. The great instruments
(Her) countenance is not dark, but natural, pure,
(There is) an air of magic in her appearance.

*[Dolbh, notable historian
of Magh Luirg; Sanbh,
king of Connaught, AD 56]*

17 MONGÁN IS MAC ΘAΞΘA,
 ΘIAS IL-ΞEASACH EALATHA,
 ΘÁ ΞCAOIL-ÉEASAM Δ CEOL SO
 ÉÁ MEOR ΞCAOIM-ÉASCAIΘ ΞCUΘRA.

Mongán and the son of the Daghdha,
A pair (full of) magic spells and learning,
Closely watching this music
Played by fragrant, pleasingly nimble fingers.

*[Mongán, son of Manannán
mac Lir, having the ability to
change his shape, as a deer,
salmon, seal, swan or wolf.
Daghdha, god of Tuatha Dé
Danann]*

18 ΘÍOL NA NÉAMΘA NIOLÁS ΘALL
 Δ ΘÍOL-SA AN ÉRUIT CONÉLANN,

AN DALL-SÁ DÍSI IÓIR
IS ISÍ D'ANNSA AN OIRFÍDÍŠ.

Worthy of the heavenly lady is Blind Nicholas [Nicholas Pierse: see Appendix]
And worthy is the harp, a match
Of the blind man to her
And she is the love of the harper.

19 Éin-ní i sCONCLANN Δ ceoil uill
níOR CÓIR ΔCT CROÍDE ÉAMUINN,
ΔCT CÉ LEOR Δ luinne òe,
IS sUINNE AN ceol 'na CROÍDE.

Anything in comparison with her
Is not proper, except the heart of Eamonn, [generosity]
But although the rapture of it is plenteous
The music is less than the heart.

20 Ionmáin RÁIB DO RAID AN CRUIT,
CROÍDE ÚR, ΔIGNÉAD OIRDEARC,
SÉAS SÁOR RAITRÉIMEAC RASAC,
CAOM CAITRÉIMEAC CEANNASAC.

Dear (to me) the hero who presented the harp,
A pure heart, a noble mind,
A noble, fortunate, vigorous young man,
Kind, triumphant, commanding.

21 MÓR AN SÉAN DÁ ŠRUAIÓ ŠLANTAIS,
DUAME BLAIÓ Δ ČADARTAIS,
MAIRFÍÓ beo MAR BEIREAR SOIN,
ŠO DEO IS ŠO DEIREADÓ DOMÁIN.

Great the happiness to his cool fresh cheek,
Enduring the fame of his gift,
He will live greatly as this (story) is told
Forever, and to the end of the world.

22 SAn uAin DTeirc-se tArLá Ann
 uAisneAc An obAíR D'Éamonn,
 An cAitleoḡAn ḡo ḡscrú nDíl,
 AitbéoDáD clú A cínD.

In the present difficult times
 Lonely is the work of Eamonn,
 The champion of true blood,
 To revive the fame of his race.

23 AR DTeAcT ó MhAisḡ Luirḡ i le,
 fUAíR oLLAmhnaCt is uAisle,
 is mAR DO fílL An uAíRse DÍ,
 Dó cính AR uAisle AisTí.

On coming here from Magh Luirg [*a medieval kingdom located in
 (Where) he achieved learning and nobility, modern-day in Co. Roscommon*]
 As he returns now
 He surpasses all nobility.

24 fEAR nAc ceAnn-cAs, clú nAc ḡAnn,
 EAScARA An ionnínuis Éamonn
 DARR ḡAc doIn An uAíRse Dó
 Dó tAoiD uAisle in AnmA.

A man (who is) not malicious, of renown not rare
 The enemy of greed is Eamonn,
 The superior of everyone at this time
 In regard to nobility and spirit

25 M'ionnAine mo tRéAn toDáisḡ,
 meis óḡ inḡeAn cónCuDáíR,
 M'AnnsA clí séAD-rAnḡ A sReAc
 'Sí DO cÉAD-bronn An cLÁíRseAc.

My love and most important one, [*possibly a niece of Eamonn who seems to have
 Young Meg, daughter of Conor, physically presented the harp on his behalf*]

Love of my breast, most valuable member of her line,
It was she who first presented the harp.

26 ní baosraðò, ní blaðò bréige,
 áille is oirðearc mairgréige,
 a haonloc, maorðac is mað,
 aobðac ðaonnaac is ðeallraðò.

It is not fantasy, nor false reputation,
The beauty and generosity of Margaret;
Her only fault, majesty and goodness,
Charm, humanity, grandeur.

Appendix

Nioclás Dall was Nicholas Pierse of Rathoo in north Kerry (c.1561-1653) with the appendage again of “Dall”, he being blind from an early age. While he barely receives acknowledgement by collectors, apart from Francis O’Neill, he was held in high regard among his fellow harpers, poets, the peasantry and gentry of the time, and indeed seen as a threat and danger to their cause by the crown forces.

Nicholas Pierse, commonly referred to as Nicholas dall, he being blind, [was] celebrated for his capacity in composing laments and other ancient strains, he enjoyed the distinction, O’Curry tells us, of having three odes written in his praise. It appears that he fell into disfavor with the government for it is recorded in the State Papers that Nicholas Dall, Rattoo, County Kerry, was pardoned with nine others in 1601 by Queen Elizabeth and her Lord Deputies in Ireland.¹⁰

A very full and knowledgeable account of Nicholas Dall by John H. Pierce (family historian, 1921-2002) was published in the *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol. 6, 40-75, 1973. This article is available as download for €5.00 from: <https://www.kerryhistory.ie/purchase/journals/page/4/>

10 *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, Francis O’Neill (Chicago 1913; republished EP Publishing, UK 1973) 27-8.

Addendum

As a musician with a life-long interest in history and folklore, I have relied, in researching my article, on established and recognised sources, in combination with oral tradition.

My cited source, *Irish Music in the Seventeenth Century (1601-1650)* by W.H. Gratton Flood, and the opposing view expounded by Cynthia Cathcart and Keith Sanger in *Dictates Against Harpers* (WireStrungHarp website), can both be considered revisionist. Historians generally seek to more fully understand the past in a contemporary context, and bring their individual viewpoints, dispositions and perspectives to bear on the subjects they study.

While the verbatim nature of the quotation from the edict attributed to Elizabeth I and its subsequent execution by Lord Barrymore may be open to question, the intention and spirit of the “alleged” edict were such as to achieve an equally devastating result.

Following the above period, the slash and burn policies of Oliver Cromwell further ensured the achievement of what the Earl of Orrery declared “has so broken and shattered the nation that they could never make head afterwards”.

– *Memoirs of Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery (1742)*, p.20 / *A History of Ireland and Her People*, Cromwell In Ireland, Eleanor Hull (libraryireland.com).

Feargal Mac Amhlaoibh

Musician, activist and raconteur, Feargal mac Amhlaoibh is based in Dún Chaoin in Corca Dhuibhne, the West Kerry Gaeltacht, where he set up his own publishing and printing business, Inné Dún Chaoin in 1987. He has published a considerable range of



books and pamphlets in the Irish language including *An Pota Stóir*, *Bailiúchán Ceol Chorca Dhuibhne*, a collection of West Kerry traditional music. He plays traditional fiddle and has travelled widely as a musician, in Ireland and abroad.

Feargal is well known as a community and language activist and has both spearheaded and participated in many campaigns for the benefit of Irish-speaking areas. He was a founding member of Comhdháil na nOileán, Feachtas Náisiúnta Teilifíse, Todhchaí na Gaeltachta and Airdeall, and in 1995 was appointed to Coiste Bunaithe Theilifís na Gaeilge, now TG4. He is currently Vice-Chairman of Comharchumann Dhún Chaoin and a member of the Coiste Comhairleach Phlean Teanga Chorca Dhuibhne.

Apart from the Irish language and music, he has a lifelong interest in local history and folklore and completed a Diploma in the latter with UCG in 2012. His research into the well known Blasket Island tune, Port na bPúcaí was published in the *Kerry Archaeological & Historical Society Magazine*, Series 2 Vol. 6 in 2007 (<https://www.kerryhistory.ie/product/series-2-vol-7-2007/>)

His memoir, *An Lúb ar Lár*, was published by Coiscéim in 1999.