

Eamon Coyne and Sean McNamara were original members of the famed Liverpool Ceili Band a band that had four fiddle players in its front line including Charlie Lennon who has become increasingly well known in recent years since returning to Ireland, and the original leader, Kit Hodge. who moved to Dublin and is sadly no longer with us.

Peggy Peakin had played fiddle in Liverpool for almost half a century but she didn't join her sister Kit in the band until several years after their headiest days in the early sixties, replacing Peggy Atkins on piano. During the sixties they won the 'All Ireland' ceili band competition two years running (Mullingar 1963 & Clones 1964), as well as the Oireactas competition in 1962 and 1963. They made two records on the Rex label (Decca), visited America and appeared on 'Sunday Night at the London Palladium'!

Eamon, Sean and Peggy have, since then, become the driving forces in the Liverpool traditional Irish music scene, and in particular they have, over a number of years, they taught enthusiastic young (and not so young) fiddle players through night school classes.

We had planned to record the three of them, concentrating on their older repertoire, in 1990, but tragically Eamon died two weeks before the recording session was scheduled. We decided to continue with the project: to record Sean and Peggy and some of the players Eamon had encouraged, and also to search for private recordings of Eamon: not an easy task, as Eamon was surprisingly modest about his solo playing. In fact this album very much become a tribute to the man.

The resulting mixture of studio and live recordings focuses mainly on the old repertoire played in an old-fashioned style rarely heard in Irish music sessions nowadays. There are strong hints of West Clare in Sean's playing, due to a long association with that county, although he is Liverpoolian by birth. Eamon was born in Co. Roscommon but lived most of his life on Merseyside. His wild, inventive style of playing is the result of many influences: he was always keen to learn new tunes, particularly on his many trips to Irish Fleadhs, Peggy was born in Liverpool, and adds an older perspective to the playing as she recalls musicians in the city in the 1930's, including one, a flute player, called McKeown who was the source of the polka on track 12.

The 'Long Strand' of fiddle music has been a vibrant and continuing tradition in Liverpool, which was influenced and inspired by Sean McNamara, Eamon Coyne and Peggy Peakin.

