

The attached jpg files are of a letter O'Mealy wrote to our great-grandfather, George Farrar, in 1929. It's a response to an enquiry about getting a practice set of pipes for Stephen, my grandfather's half-brother. It's a really good letter. O'Mealy wanted to know how much George was willing to spend and what sort he would like etc. We still have this practice set. They went to Papa when he started playing.

Jonathan Farrar, June 2007

109 Rugby Avenue  
Ormeau Road,  
Belfast  
10.3.29

Dear George

Since I got your note of 25 Feb. I spent several days examining and testing some chanters I have, with the idea that one might do Stephen. Most of them are by old makers and a few by myself, but all are long, low pitch, and much harder to "cover" than say, a 15". Not only would a learner get along quicker with an easier covered chanter (14.5" or 15") but it would be more useful for general playing at anytime. Shorter chanters I do not approve of, as they are too tinny and thin in the tone. A 15" is a useful pitch and gets away from the thin tone and is just as easily covered as the shortest. But it will be necessary for me to make a 15". The long ones I have would not come cheaper than a new one in Good Persian, Indian, African, N. American, or Irish Boxwood. I paid more for some of those old ones for investigation purposes. There is such a wide field in the general "get up", such diversity in material, construction and finish, apart from looking for tone in the making, that quoting a price is like trying to mislead the purchaser, and I would not be willing to do that; the Dublin man did a good deal of quoting. The Uilleann pipes (Irish pipes) are not like anything else I know of. I would be glad if you could see your way

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to enter into the thing more fully, as it would be helpful and save our time in writing and fixing a price. Our point is to write about the thing I am to make to a price. Yes, certainly, be candid; the more candid you are with me the better I'm pleased. The sort of work that I would do I could not have a profit on a chanter, bag and bellows, because, as you know, it requires the same amount of wind arrangements as a full set. Just be candid and give me an idea of what you wd be willing to and I'll give you particulars as to the best I could do to fit

it. Would you go £4 or so, and have a thing to keep, nice tone and look well. Later on, if necessary, Stephen could sell a thing of that sort, but the cheaper things he could not. I don't want profit on anything I make for you, but I would like to be able to cover a job that would do me some credit and be a possible advertisement in the struggle for existence. I have some nice box of various kinds picked out for his chanter. It would be better to write to me as soon as you possibly can, as I could get some of the things started. I will be taking part in a little skitch programme on the Wireless Saturday Evp. 16<sup>th</sup>, it will be after 9pm (from 9.30) but won't be playing much on the pipes this time, I think – I'm not sure, it depends on the run of the sketch. The neuritis, or rheumatism, gets into my hands badly sometimes lately and hits me hard at the playing. It's hard to do anything for some sorts of neuritis.

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I got out for an hour last Friday for the first time in over 6 weeks illness, and, like yourself, I had no grass – in fact less than you – to keep growing. When we stop everything stops. The Bronchitis kept me shut up. But the other thing is a W\_

I am glad you are so well. You are a young man. I am also glad you have plenty of work. Thousands in Belfast, including myself, wish they could say the same. I know some cases of work that does not afford the cheapest food.

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I know a young man in your line here and the firm he works for are getting it so hard they owe him £50- in wages not paid from time to time. He knows if he leaves them he won't get a job, and if he kicks up he will get the sack and then he would not even get the dole. If they fail he will loose all his money. I came through all that sort of thing and lost, and one can't do anything. It is worse than slavery. Hard work and even plain food with enough of God's Air is what I call life. The F. State Authorities tell me that Leinster, as a whole, is doing well. All the Dublin firms are paying dividends. None paying in Belfast.

*They say all the money is in Leinster.*

Hoping to hear soon,  
Yours sincerely  
O'Mealy.