

*Bill Black's
Irish Traditional Tune Library*

"CEOL RINCE na hEIREANN"

updated March 2026

This project represents an effort to capture the contents of the five existing *Ceol Rince na hEireann* volumes in digitized format.

You can access a list of all the tunes in the file by [clicking here](#).

Irish musicologist Breandán Breathnach collected this material from various sources - both in print and via recordings or live performances - over many years. Volume 1 (of 5) was published in 1963 and the last volume in 1999 (which was edited by Jackie Small after Breathnach's death in 1985). Many of the tunes are unique to CRE.

More information about Breathnach and CRE can be found [here](#).

The wealth of great music collected by Breathnach and his successors has made the expense of effort in doing these transcriptions well worth the effort. I have been a great admirer of the [ABC format](#) as a tool for preserving and learning traditional music since I first came across it nearly thirty years ago, not least because of ABC's ability to reproduce a simple text file in both notation and sound format without the need for any additional music software.

As with collections in the ITTL, CRE has been assigned a master folder number of 18. There are five sub-folders corresponding to the five CRE volumes. Each volume folder (181 for volume 1, 182 for volume 2, and so on) contains the ABC files (in RTF format, which is a text format that supports links) and an HTML file, which is created using Michael Eskin's fine [ABC Transcription Tools](#) app.

The RTF files contain all the "support" material. In addition to the actual ABCs, "notes & commentary" and other incidental information may be included, but are non-printing. This avoids print formatting conflicts between different apps.

The HTML entries contain embedded sound files in addition to the notation. The sound reproduction capability remains with the individual tune file, so any tunes "exported" to your hard drive will contain the sound file as well.

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Also note that the files as formatted will work in any ABC translator (e.g. EasyABC), although the output may differ from that available via ABC Tools.

I invite musicians to take full advantage of these files to expand their musical experience by degrees of magnitude, all without having to involve themselves in the process of how the ABC format works (although it's simple enough to learn).

Not all tunes included in the CRE series are found on my site - in particular, most of the better-known tunes that have already appeared in ABC format elsewhere (according to John Chamber's TuneFinder site, a great resource) have been omitted.

I have also omitted a number of CRE entries that represented highly-ornamented settings of tunes. These may be of interest to musicologists or students of particular instrumental styles (e.g. pipers), but they are not relevant to my own purpose of getting the CRE material to musicians in an "easy to learn, easy to play" format.

For the same reason, I have chosen to reduce CRE's ornamentation to zero (or a bare minimum), the idea being that a musician will add his or her own ornamentation when ready. Once the tune is learned, the triplets and rolls can be added "to taste".

This is my personal view as a performer and an archivist of this music. Others in the same categories will disagree with me, and to assuage their distress at my presumption, I offer to replace my own titles with any authentic ones that they uncover!

In the 2022 update of these files I have mostly avoided the use of the Gaelic titles - which are mostly awkward "back translations" of the English names - altogether. But in any event my sincere thanks to Paul de Grae for permission to use his [introductory notes and his translations of the editors' notes](#) in these volumes.

Note that the third digit of the file number represents the CRE volume where the original tune can be found, while the last three digits represent the tune's number in that volume. Hence tune 183207 = tune #207 in CRE III.

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Comments, suggestions, etc. welcome as always - email address:

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June 2025**