

TSDL153

IRELAND HER OWN

'Ireland her own and all therein from
the sod to the sky' *James Fintan Lalor*

A history in song of Ireland's
fight for independence from
the sixteenth to the twentieth
century

Paddy Tunney

Arthur Kearney

Frank Kelly violin

Joe Tunney melodeon

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Tudors, Stuarts, Commonwealth and After

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2. Sean O'Dwyer a Gleanna Paddy Tunney
3. Jackets Green Arthur Kearney
4. The Battle of Aughrim Frank Kelly
– violin
Joe Tunney
– melodeon

The United Irishmen and the Rebellion of 1798

5. The Ribbon Blade Paddy Tunney
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– violin
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*Recorded by Bill Leader in Letterkenny, Donegal,
1966*

Notes by Hugh McAteer

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The engraving on the front of this sleeve shows Fenian prisoners at Dublin brought from the lower castle yard on their way to Mountjoy Prison. It is from the Illustrated London News of March 16th 1867 and is from John Foreman's collection.

When Chesterton wrote of the Irish 'All their wars were merry and all their songs are sad' he was sacrificing accuracy for the sake of a paradox. The wars themselves were ruthless savage campaigns of destruction on the one hand and desperate struggles for existence on the other. The British fought as conquerors with scant regard for the rules of war, the Irish fought for something ancient and good, and they fought as crusaders. Their songs reflected their attitude, full of sadness for previous defeats, but convinced of the justice of their cause and confident that the final battle would be won.

Tudors, Stuarts, Commonwealth and After

From time immemorial, clan chiefs such as the O'Neills, O'Donnells and Fitzgeralds were a power in Ireland. The English bought some of the clan chiefs with titles and honours, but sent punitive expeditions against those who refused to be bought. When Queen Elizabeth turned her unwelcome attention to Ireland she found herself confronted by a host of local revolts that ran together to form something like a general

revolt over half Ireland.

Brutal reprisals failed to subjugate Ireland, and half a century later while England was rent by Civil War, the clans rose again under the famous Eoghan Ruadh ('Owen Roe') O'Neill. But O'Neill died (some say at the hand of a hired poisoner). The rebellion was savagely crushed by Cromwell, and the Gaelic civilisation and social organisation that had endured for a thousand years, perished.

In 1690, Ireland found herself again involved in a war of conquest. The Catholic James II had abdicated the throne of England and had landed in Ireland to muster an army. The Protestant William of Orange, now King of England, began military operations to obtain possession of Ireland in 1690, and after the Irish Jacobites had been routed at the Boyne, at Athlone and Aughrim, the cruel Williamite Wars practically ended with the Treaty of Limerick in 1691. Then followed the 'Flight of the Wild Geese' when thousands of Irish soldiers left their country to enlist in the armies of England's continental enemies.

Follow me up to Carlow

The words of this 'marching song of Fiach McHugh O'Byrne' were written some sixty years ago by P. J. McCall. Fiach McHugh was a clan chieftain of Wicklow in the sixteenth century, and the melody is said to have been played by his pipers as he marched to attack Carlow, following his victory over Queen

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Elizabeth's Lord Deputy Grey at Glenmalure in 1580.

Sean O'Dwyer a Gleanna

There are at least two distinct songs of this title, an old Gaelic one and the present English one written by Canon Sheehan of Doneraile in the mid-nineteenth century. The original Sean O'Dwyer was a son of the chief of the O'Dwyers of Kilnamanagh, who fought alongside his distinguished cousin Edmund O'Dwyer against Cromwell during the war of 1649-52, but Canon Sheehan chose to move his exploits a generation on, to the time of the Williamite Wars. In both the old version and the newer one, O'Dwyer is a symbol of the remnants of Gaelic aristocracy forced to take service in France or live like a hunted hare in Ireland. The tune is a distant relative of the one fitted to *She Moved Through the Fair*.

The Jackets Green

The words were written in the nineteenth century by Michael Scanlon and tell the story of the defence of Limerick in the Williamite War and of the men who fought and fell in the siege. The air is a traditional one used by other poets for patriotic ballads. It belongs to the same tune-family as the well-known *Rocks of Bawn*.

The Lament for the Battle of Aughrim

This fine piece was composed for the pipes and laments a battle almost won. It was fought in 1691, toward the end of the Williamite War. Only when St. Ruth, who was commanding the Irish forces, was accidentally beheaded by an English cannon ball, did the Irish lose heart, fall back and allow themselves to be driven back. They were finally defeated.

The United Irishmen and the Rebellion of 1798

Both the American War of Independence and the French Revolution had their effect on Irish aspirations. These aspirations materialised in the formation of the Society of United Irishmen in 1791, and led to the great Rising of 1798.

The Ribbon Blade

This traditional song was taken down from Michael Gallagher of Castlecaldwell, Co. Fermanagh. A Ribbonman was a member of one of the secret resistance movements operating in the 1798 period.

General Munro

Henry Munro was a Lisburn draper who found himself at the head of 7,000 rebels in Down. Munro's men were successful in two hard-fought engagements against the English, but on June 14th 1798 they were defeated at Ballynahinch. Munro was betrayed and hanged before his own shop door. His ballad appears

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on Belfast broadsides, and is well-known in Ulster. The last verse was provided by Bulmer Hobson, organiser for the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

The Memory of the Dead

John Kells Ingram set to this march tune his famous poem beginning 'Who fears to speak of "Ninety-eight?"' Publication of the poem earned a gaol sentence for Daniel O'Connell in 1843. Since then the tune has been attached to many rebel ballads, notably *Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week?* and *The Third West Cork Brigade*.

The Young Ireland Movement & the Fenians

In the 1840s the Young Irelanders moved on to the stage of Irish history. The leaders, both Catholic and Protestant, were highly intellectual and literate men and though their military effort in 1848 was a complete failure, they left a heritage of songs and ballads that still retain their freshness and appeal. In the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century the Irish Republican Brotherhood (popularly known as the Fenians) produced a movement that was the most widespread and dangerous to British rule in Ireland for over half a century. Their organisation penetrated into every corner of Ireland and even into the ranks of the British Army. Their

fight in March 1867 also ended in failure, but they exercised a profound influence on British policy in Ireland and their names and deeds are still vividly remembered by the Irish people, for whom events like the hanging of the three Manchester Martyrs in November 1867 and the escape of the Fenian leader, James Stephens, from Richmond Jail are still the subject of song and story and legend.

The Bold Fenian Men

This brisk marching song has been attributed to J. Boyle O'Reilly, also to Michael Scanlon. In fact it was probably written by William Rooney around the year 1900 to commemorate the movement that produced such men as John O'Leary, Charles John Mitchel, Joseph Kickham and Jeremiah O'Donovan-Rossa. This spirited ballad was contemporary with the arrest and transportation of that famous Ulster patriot in 1848, and has spread his fame almost to the same extent as his own classic, *Jail Journal*.

The Felons of our Land

One of the finest songs of the Fenian period. Perhaps no other movement was nearer the heart of the Irish people nor was more feared and hated by Ireland's enemies. Those Fenians who escaped the gallows got long sentences in prison. Arthur M. Forrester who wrote this song manages to imply all these things

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together with the scant regard the Irish people paid to the attacks of the critics.

The Sinn Fein and the War of Independence

A handful survived to pass on their principles and policy to the Irish Volunteers, formed on the eve of the First World War. Led by Padraig Pearse, poet and teacher, and by James Connolly, Socialist, Trade Unionist and founder of the Dublin People's Citizen Army, less than a thousand men of the Irish Volunteers and Citizen Army seized Dublin's General Post Office and other points on Easter Monday 1916, and proclaimed the Irish Republic. For almost a week they held out until, with the heart of Dublin a shattered and smoking ruin, they surrendered. Sixteen of the leaders, including the wounded and dying Connolly, were shot in Kilmainham Jail and buried in Arbour Hill Military Prison. Rapidly, the glow of that Easter fire spread throughout Ireland and soon the people were proudly singing of the fighting men of past generations with the addition of the new songs in memory of the Men of Easter Week.

In memory of these men who fought and died in 1916, this collection of songs is recorded, a garland of Easter Lilies on the graves of those who went 'forth to break their strength and die in bloody protest for a

glorious thing', from those who in later years saw the same vision, trod the same path and sought to do as they did.

The Dawning of the Day

This march is a member of a multitudinous tune-family known under its old Gaelic name of *Fainne Geal an Lae*. *The Boys of Wexford* is a variant of it. Other variants have carried the words of *High Germany*, *The Wild Colonial Boy*, and the American ballad of *Young Charlotte*. Edward Walsh, the gentle poet and onetime schoolteacher in the penal colony of Spike Island, Cork, made the best translation into English of the symbolic Gaelic words concerning the vision of Ireland as a beautiful young woman.

A Song of the Dawn

The words of this song, set to the *Fainne Geal an Lae* tune, were written by Brian O'Higgins, who fought in the Rising of 1916 and dealt with the War of Independence period. The song signifies the revival of a nation.

The Valley of Knockanure

The version sung here was written by the County Kerry author Bryan McMahon. The ballad of three young heroes surrounded and killed by Black and Tans is sometimes regarded as one of the finest to

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come out of the War of Independence period.

The Grand Oul' Dame Britannia

This delightful satire has been attributed by many to a famous Irish playwright. Its lively air is played throughout the country for set-dances; every fiddler has a different name for it.

Kevin Barry

This ballad of the eighteen year old student who died for Ireland on November 1st 1920, was learned by Paddy Tunney from James Finlay of Killyshandra, County Cavan in 1957. It has spread to the West of Ireland and is not infrequently heard at the All-Ireland Fleadh Ceoil (Music Festival). The air is a variant of a melody used for many texts including *The Wicklow Mountains High* and *The Roving Galway Boy*. A Gaelic form of it is known in Mayo as *Mair' ni Ghriobhtha*.

Biographical Notes

Paddy Tunney comes from Co. Fermanagh, one of the six sundered counties of Ireland. He has a high reputation for the singing of traditional songs, many of which he learned from his mother who is still hail and hearty and singing at the age of 80. When Paddy was 18 he became a very active member of the I.R.A.

in Co. Fermanagh and at the age of 22 he was arrested in Enniskillen and sentenced to seven years penal servitude for the possession of explosives. It was in the famous A Wing of Belfast Prison that he met Arthur Kearney and Hugh McAteer. Paddy was not infrequently threatened with bread and water for singing traditional songs and lilting in his cell. After his release in 1947 Paddy became a Health Inspector in Donegal and has taken the opportunity to collect songs in the locality. He also broadcasts on both Radio Eireann and B.B.C. Northern Ireland. He writes poetry and has recorded several LPs, notably 'The Man of Songs' for Folk Legacy and 'A Wild Bees' Nest' for Topic.

Arthur Kearney was born in Clanabogan, Omagh, County Tyrone, joined the I.R.A. at the age of 17. In 1940 he was sentenced to eight years penal servitude for resistance activities. His father, Felix, was a well-known poet and Arthur was taught to sing in the Fenian tradition at a tender age. He also mastered the Gaelic while in prison and upon his release, won many prizes for Gaelic singing at festivals throughout the country. He has written songs himself and is at present Secretary of the Ulster Council of the Traditional Musicians of Ireland. (Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann). Arthur has broadcast on the B.B.C. frequently.

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Hugh McAteer was born in 1917. At the age of 17 he joined the I.R.A. At 19 he was sentenced to seven years imprisonment. He was released in 1941 and in 1942 was appointed Chief of Staff. In the following year he was involved in a spectacular jail break and the daring commandeering of a Belfast Cinema. He was also recaptured and imprisoned. In all Hugh McAteer has spent 12 years in jail as a result of his fight for Ireland.

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