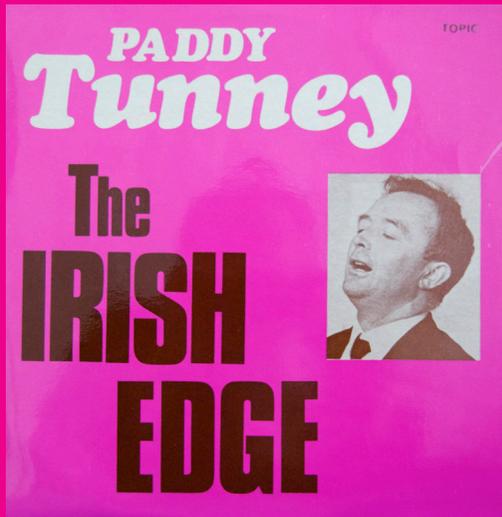


PADDY
Turney





PADDY TUNNEY

THE IRISH EDGE

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Photograph by Douglas Baton

Paddy Tunney, known to his friends in Ireland as ‘The Man of Songs’, was born of Irish parents in Glasgow just about the end of the Anglo-Irish War in 1921. His parents returned to their old home and Paddy grew up in a neat farmstead on the borders of Donegal and Fermanagh, overlooking the legendary Lough Erne. Paddy’s own words tell of his family and traditions:

‘My mother, Brigid Tunney, was a fine traditional singer. She taught me to lilt and sing. Her Father, Michael Gallagher, used to take me on his knees and sing to me. He knew both languages, Irish and English. and had a fine repertoire of folk-tales and ballads. He could make a drop of the good old mountain dew, and was well known to all the travelling journeymen, tinsmiths, tailors, cobblers, weavers etc. who used to visit the locality in his young days. He was a fine singer and storyteller. My father, Patrick Tunney, was a fine reel dancer, so lilting, fiddling and melodeon playing filled my most impressionable years.’

Paddy has worked as a forester, a road-roller flagman, and as a cobbler - this latter job being undertaken in the bootshop of H.M. Prison, Belfast, where he spent four and a half years for his part in I.R.A. activities. Here he learned the Irish language, studied Irish history and began to write poetry. On his release he took training in University College, Dublin, as a health inspector, and has served in that capacity in Dublin and Kerry, and in Donegal where he works at present.

Wherever he has travelled he has added to the store of traditional songs and music first begun in his childhood home beside Lough Erne. A prize-winning lilter, he has often acted as adjudicator at Fleadhanna Cheoil (Irish Music Festivals). He has sung for Radio Eireann and the BBC and has already recorded the album called A WILD BEES’ NEST (12T139) for Topic.

Craigie Hill

Paddy learned this song from his mother. It is a genuine Ulster song of exile written at a time when, for reasons given in the song itself, every Irish port had its emigrant ship. It is to be contrasted with the sentimental nostalgic type of exile-song produced outside the country by people who have never lived in it. Here the exile’s reason for leaving is clearly stated:

To landlords and their agents, to bailiffs and their beagles,

The land of our forefathers we’re forced for to give o’er. A better life is promised in America (and incidentally the song is dated) in the lines:

We’ll be happy as Queen Victoria, /All in her greatest glory, /We’ll be drinking wine and porter/All in Amerikay. Students of versification will be interested in the metrical support given to the long musical line by the insertion of internal assonances (marked in italics). *Craigie Hill* is written in the form of an overheard conversation - a favourite folk -device, where the poet represents himself as wandering out to hear two lovers talking, and then tells his own story through their lips. The tune is Doh mode hexatonic.

The Lark In The Morning

This lively snatch of song was a great favourite of Paddy’s grandfather, Michael Gallagher from Donegal. Though the tune is undoubtedly Irish, the words are obviously English in origin, for it is true to say that *The Lark in the Morning* may be safely taken as a symbol of the Ploughboy, as he is represented in English folksong:

Up with the lark at the break of day

He guides his speedy plough.

Roger the ploughman and Susan the milkmaid, mentioned in the song, are strangers in Ireland - but they are welcome. The tune, which is highly ornamented by Paddy, is in the Re mode.

Johnny, Lovely Johnny

In rural Ulster many songs used to be sung on the kitchen floor as conversations between a boy and a girl, or a man and a woman. This conversation-piece from Tyrone protests the enduring affection of Lovely Annie for the fickle Johnny who, as he says himself, never intended to make her his wife. Paddy learned it from his mother. The tune is Doh mode hexatonic.

The Cow That Drank The Poteen

This home-spun song comes from Ardaghey in the Inver district of Donegal, where about fifty years ago illicit liquor (poitin, *poteen*) was manufactured on a large scale. 'It was so plentiful', says Paddy, 'that the kettles were often filled from it in mistake for spring water', the song tells of the adventures of Paddy Shinahan's cow which made a similar mistake. The song, coming as it does from Donegal, which even at the present has a large percentage of Irish speakers, contains a number of Irish words, in the following order: *buarach* (a tether), *a mhuirnin* (my dear), *a bhuachaille* (my boy), *a mhic* (my son). The tune is a variant of *Master McGrath* (known in England as *Villikins and his Dinah*) a very popular medium for folk-poetry.

Blackwater Side

Another tale of unrequited love, set to a beautiful air which Paddy decorates in characteristic fashion. The first verse is evidently modelled on *The Irish Girl* (cf. Joyce, *Old Irish Folk Music and Song*, and Colm O Lochlainn, *More Irish Street Ballads*), but there the resemblance ends. Paddy learned the song from the singing of a 'traveller', Paddy Doran, who says that the River Blackwater referred to in the song is in County Wexford. The tune is Doh mode hexatonic.

Out Of The Window

Paddy speaks before he sings this song, and rightly points out that it has an affinity with Padraic Colum's *She Moved Through the Fair* (cf. Herbert Hughes, *Irish Country Songs*). It should also be compared with *I Once Had a True Love*, which Paddy has already recorded for Topic on 12T139 *A Wild Bees' Nest*, and which is immediately recognisable as the source of Colum's sophisticated adaptation. The words of *Out of the Window*, as Paddy sings them, seem also to have been touched up by some poet like Colum, and students of folksong would be well-advised to consult *Sam Henry Collection*, Vol. 1, number 141, where a version from County Derry is printed. Paddy got the air (Doh mode hexatonic) from his mother, and he gives a really beautiful rendering of it in his own inimitable style.

The Month Of January

Here is one of the eternal folk-themes, the lamentations of the young girl expelled from her father's home because of her love for a 'false young man'. Herbert Hughes, in his *Irish Country Songs* gives a few verses of it to a different air under the title of *The Fanaid Grove*. Paddy learned his version from the singing to a different air of the famous Sarah Makem of Keady, Co. Armagh. The very interesting melody is in the Sol mode. I know of no other song sung to this air.

The Rambling Boys of Pleasure

I first heard this song in 1954 from Robert Cinnamond of Aghadalgan on the shores of Lough Neagh in County Antrim. Paddy tells me that he has heard another version in North Mayo, but in this recording he sings Robert's song, both words and music. Students of literature will recognise in the song the source of Yeats' *Old Song Resung* now better known as *Down by the Sally Gardens* (Herbert Hughes, *Irish Country Songs*). Verse two of *The Rambling Boys* should be compared with Yeats':

Down in the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
 She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
 She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
 But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.
 And with this version from New Hampshire, U.S.A.:

It's down in Sally's Garden
 O there hangs Rosies three
 O there, I met a fair Maid
 who told to me her mind so free
 She bids me take love easy
 As leaves they do fall from the tree
 but I being young and Crazy
 Could not with her agree.
 (Flanders and Olney, *Ballads Migrant in New England*)
 The melody is in the Doh mode. As far as I know there is no other song sung to this air, either in Irish or in English.

The Lowlands Of Holland

This is a Scots press gang song naturalised in Ireland. Hence, being an Irish singer, Paddy Tunney naturally sings of 'Galway' where the original text speaks of 'Galloway'. The Holland in the song is New Holland, or the East Indies:

Where the sugar cane is plentiful
 And the tea grows on each tree.

Versions of *The Lowlands of Holland* are to be found in every part of Britain and Ireland. Texts with various tunes have been published in *Folk Songs from Somerset* (No. 44), Herbert Hughes' *Irish Country Songs* (Vol. ii, 70) and Joyce's *Old Irish Folk Music and Songs* (p.214). Cecil Sharp collected a fragmentary version of it at Nash, Virginia, and published it in *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, Vol 1 (p. 200). The beautiful air here used is sometimes cheapened by being sung in marching time, but Paddy's tempo, learned traditionally from his mother, is very much in keeping with the feeling of the words. Like so many of Paddy's songs, the tune is Doh mode hexatonic.

The Wearing Of Britches

This song is a fine example of a very common folk-song type - *The Chanson du Malmarié*. As the Irish proverb has it, there is nothing as bad as a bad match, so ill-matched husbands have always found their grievances well-aired by folk-poets sometimes jauntily as here, and sometimes pathetically as in *The Old Man Rocking the Cradle* (see next note). Like all songs of this type, the singer ends with good advice for those contemplating matrimony:

My advice it is to you
 To marry for love and work for riches.
 If you can't get a girl with an honest tongue
 I don't give you leave to wear your britches.

Paddy got *The Wearing of the Britches* from an old neighbour, Pat Bell Keown. The tune is reminiscent of a Gaelic drinking song *Olaim Puins* (*I Drink Punch*), and perhaps the marriage of words and air is most appropriate.

The Old Man Rocking The Cradle

This famous song is another *Chanson du Malmarié*. It is known in one form or another from Manchuria to the West of Ireland. The old man left rocking the cradle while his wife is gallivanting with a younger man, sings a lullaby to the baby 'that's none of his own'. His song ends with the usual warning :

So come all you young men that's inclined to get married,

Take my advice, leave the women alone,

For by the Law Harry if ever you marry,

They'll leave you there rocking the cradle alone.

Paddy learned the song from John Doherty, one of the greatest traditional fiddlers in Ireland, who invariably follows up his singing of the song by playing it on the fiddle. Paddy ilts it.

The tune is 'Seoithln Seo', an old Irish *suantraidhe* (lullaby). The mothers of Connemara have a great reverence for the tune, believing it was used by the Blessed Virgin in putting her child to sleep (*Amhráin Mhuighe Séola*, pp. 66-67, Talbot Press, Dublin.)

She's A Gay Old Hag

A few rollicking rakish verses from a well known ribald song. There are many local and particularised versions of it. Appropriately enough, Paddy learned these snatches of it from Paddy Doran, the 'traveller' from whom he learned Blackwater Side. The tune is Re mode.

St. Peter's Day Was A-Dawning

Once a year in the early part of the nineteenth century, a body of men calling themselves the Knights of St. Patrick used to march in a religious procession to Teer Island in South Armagh. The procession was held to celebrate the Feast of St. Peter, on June twenty-ninth, St. Peter's Day. It had a special significance for Irish Catholics, whose adherence to the See of Peter was part and parcel of their resistance to English domination, as represented by their Protestant neighbours. The procession therefore had a political as well as a religious significance. Paddy's song gives not only a description of the flamboyant procession but also an insight into the fierce religious hatred underlying Ulster political life since the seventeenth century. It includes also some allusions to the mythical origins of the Irish race (the Gaels) from Gadelus, who is said to have accompanied Moses out of Egypt. Throughout the song, the Irish people are referred to either as Milesians or as Sons of Grainnia (*Grainne Mhaol Ireland*). Out of a series of strongly worded verses, one may be taken to show the depth of feeling in the song:

And it's now to conclude, my advice to you
Is to tear down all rotten foundations,
And banish this crew that our land did pollute
And corrupted our true ordinations.
We'll raise up a storm and chase them away,
All the informers since King Harry's day,
And all other tribes that with them would say.

We'll send them a-sailing, all putrid and carron,
To some other island that's fruitless and barren,
For this one was promised to Moses and Aaron

When St. Peter's Day was a-dawning.

The air is of similar construction to the well-known *St. Patrick's Day in the Morning* - a title which seems to have suggested the very name of the song. Paddy learned it from the singing of Peter Reilly, a native of South Armagh.

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