

The parallel musical traditions of Nationalists and Unionists in Ireland

Nationalist Songs

Shan Van Vocht

Ah the French are on the sea says the Shan van Vocht
The French are on the sea says the Shan Van Vocht
The French are on the sea, they'll be here without delay
And the Orange will decay says the Shan Van Vocht
And the Orange will decay says the Shan Van Vocht

And the French they are the boys says the Shan Van Vocht
Gained their freedom without noise says the Shan Van Vocht
Louis Phillippe, they made him run by the firing of a gun
And t'was then they had great fun said the Shan Van Vocht
And t'was then they had great fun said the Shan Van Vocht

And where will they have their camp? Says the Shan Van Vocht
And where will they have their camp? Says the Shan Van Vocht
On the Curragh of Kildare and the boys they will be there
And with their pikes in good repair says the Shan Van Vocht
With their pikes in good repair says the Shan Van Vocht.

And will all the boys be there? Says the Shan Van Vocht
And will all the boys be there? Says the Shan Van Vocht
The boys will all be there, with their pikes in good repair
And Lord Edward will be there, says the Shan Van Vocht
And Lord Edward will be there, says the Shan Van Vocht

And what will the yeomen do? Says the Shan Van Vocht
And what will the yeomen do? Says the Shan Van Vocht
And what will the yeomen do but take off the red and blue
And to liberty prove true, says the Shan Van Vocht
And to liberty prove true, says the Shan Van Vocht

And what colours will be seen? Says the Shan Van Vocht
And what colours will be seen? Says the Shan Van Vocht
What colours should be seen where our fathers' homes have been?
But our own immortal green says the Shan Van Vocht
But our won immortal green says the Shan Van Vocht.

And shall Erin then be free? Says the Shan Van Vocht
And shall Erin then be free? Says the Shan Van Vocht
Yes, Erin shall be free and we'll thank the laurel tree
And we'll call it liberty says the Shan Van Vocht
And we'll call it liberty says the Shan Van Vocht.

Song 1: Ireland, the keening old woman rejects British/Orange rule and urges direct action. The “Sean-Bhean Bhocht” metaphor carries the narrative of rebellion against the coloniser across the centuries, through nationalist poetry, literature and song, each rebellion being preparation for the final victorious battle.

Full song: <https://youtu.be/JpOjrBWU35w?list=TLPQMjgxMjJwMjJ0YAeOIT5pjA>

PARALLEL HISTORIES

Nationalist Songs

Arthur McBride/The Recruiting Sergeant.

Oh me and my cousin one Arthur McBride
as we went a walking down by the seaside
Now mark what followed and what did betide
For it being on Christmas morning

And for recreation we went on a tramp
And met Sergeant Naper and Corporal Vamp
And a little wee drummer intending to camp
For the day being pleasant and charming

Good morning, Good morning the sergeant did cry
And the same to ye gentlemen we did reply
Intending no harm but meant to pass by,
For it being on Christmas morning

What says he my fine fellows if you will enlist
Its ten guineas in gold I will slip in your fist
And the crown into the bargain
to kick up the dust
And drink the king's health in the morning

For a soldier he leads a very fine life
And he always is blessed with a charming young wife
And he pays all his debts without sorrow or strife
And always lives pleasant and charming

And a soldier he always is decent and clean
In the finest of clothes and is constantly singing
While other poor fellows are dirty and mean
And sup on thin gruel in the morning

What says Arthur, I wouldn't be proud of your clothes,
For you've only the lend of them as I suppose
And you dare not change them one night for you know
If you do you'll be flogged in the morning

And although that we are single and free
We take great delight in our own company
And we have no desire strange faces to see
Although all your offers are charming

And we have no desire to take your advance
All hazards and dangers we barter on chance
For you would have no scruples for to send us to France
Where we would get shot without warning

Oh now said the Sergeant I'll have no such chat
And I neither will take it from spalpeens nor brats
Or if you insult me with one other word
I'll cut off your heads in the morning

And then Arthur and I we soon drew our hearts
And we scarce gave them time to draw their own blades
When a trustee shillelagh came over their heads
And bad them take that as fair warning

And their own rusty rapiers that hung by their side
We flung them as far as we could in the tide
Now take them out devils cried Arthur McBride
And tempered the reg? in the morning

And the little wee drummer, we flattened his pouch
And we made a football of his rowdy dow dow
Threw it in the tide for to rock and to roll
And bade it a tedious returning.

And we having no money, paid them off in cracks
And we paid no respect to their two bloody backs,
But we lathered them there like a pair of wet sacks
And left them for dead in the morning.

And so to conclude and to finish disputes
We obligingly asked if they wanted recruits,
For we were the lads who would give them hard clouts
And bid them look sharp in the morning.

Oh me and my cousin one Arthur McBride
As we went a-walking down by the seaside,
Now mark what followed and what did betide
For it being on Christmas morning.

Song 2: Arthur McBride/The Recruiting Sergeant. Rejection of British militarism and all it represents - C18th/early C19th.

Full song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBGkHPx529g> (Paul Brady)

A Nation Once Again

When boyhood's fire was in my blood
I read of ancient freemen
For Greece and Rome who bravely stood
Three hundred men and three men
And there I prayed I yet might see
Our fetters rent in twain
And Ireland, long a province be
A nation once again

A nation once again (repeat)

It whisper'd too, that freedom's ark
And service high and holy
Would be prepared by feelings dark
And passion vain or lowly
For freedom comes from God's right hand
And needs a godly train
And righteous men must make our land
A nation once again
So as I grew from boy to man
I bent me to that bidding
My spirit of each selfish plan
And cruel passion ridding
For thus I hoped some day to aid
Oh, can such hope be vain
When my dear country should be made
A nation once again

A nation once again a nation once again
And Ireland, long a province be
A nation once again (to repeat)

Song 3: A Nation Once Again. Archetypal anthem of resistance to British rule from founder of Young Ireland, Thomas Davis (1844). Sung ever since by Irish Nationalists and Republicans.

Full song: <https://youtu.be/RN1YDcXHhDI> (Wolfe Tones live)

Go on home British soldiers, go on home

Go on home British soldiers Go on home
Have you got no bloody homes of your own
For 800 years we've fought you without fear
And we will fight you for 800 more

If you stay British soldiers If you stay
You'll never ever beat the IRA
For the 14 men in Derry
Are the last that you will bury
So take a tip And leave us bloody be

So Go on home British soldiers Go on home
Have you got no bloody homes of your own
For 800 years we've fought you without fear
And we will fight you for 800 more

We're not British
We're not Saxon we're not English
We're Irish and proud we are to be
So stick your Union Jack We
Want our country back
We want to see old Ireland free once more

So Go on home British soldiers Go on home
Have you got no bloody homes of your own
For 800 years we've fought you without fear
And we will fight you for 800 more

We'll fight them British soldiers
For the cause
We'll never bow to Soldiers because
Throughout our history We were born to be free
So get out British soldiers leave us be

So go on home British soldiers go on home
Have you got no bloody homes of your own
For 800 years we've fought you without fear
And we will fight you for 800 more
Go on home British soldiers go on home
Have you got no bloody homes of your own
For 800 years we've fought you without fear
And we will fight you for 800 more

Song 4: Go on home British soldiers, go on home. Tommy Skelly's song from 1972 mobilised Irish consciousness and cultural resistance to loyalism. In a 2014 post-script, Republican band 'The Druids' crossed into sectarianism by name checking Orangemen as well as British soldiers.

Full song: <https://youtu.be/40igFDaPDBc> (Wolfe Tones)

Men behind the Wire

Armoured cars and tanks and guns
Came to take away our sons
But every man must stand behind
The men behind the wire
Through the little streets of Belfast
In the dark of early morn
British soldiers came marauding
Wrecking little homes with scorn
Heedless of the crying children
Dragging fathers from their beds
Beating sons while helpless mothers
Watched the blood pour from their heads
Not for them a judge and jury
Nor indeed a trial at all
But being Irish means you're guilty
So we're guilty one and all
Round the world the truth will echo
Cromwell's men are here again
England's name again is sullied
In the eyes of honest men.
Proud we march behind our banner
Firm we'll stand behind our men
We will have them free to help us
Build a nation once again
On the people, step together
Proudly, firmly, on their way
Never fear and never falter
Till the boys come home to stay

Song 5: The Men Behind the Wire. In a pre-internet era, music was a voice rejecting the Westminster message that Catholic and Protestant communities were treated even-handedly. This song draws attention to the British policy of internment, imprisonment without trial.

Full song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvGC6QroaEM> (The Barleycorn/Paddy McGuigan)

PARALLEL HISTORIES

The parallel musical traditions of Nationalists and Unionists in Ireland

Unionist Songs

Croppies Lie Down.

All you who love darkness instead of 'True Light'
Who dare not yourself show except in the night
Lament your sad loss, let the news spread afar
The great overthrow of 'The Northern Star'
Derry down down, Derry down down, Derry down down,
Croppies lie down.

In the county of Wexford these rebels did rise,
These brave Orange men they swore they'd sacrificed
They thought that our army they surely would beat,
But we boldly attacked them and made them retreat.
Derry down down, Derry down down, Derry down down,
Croppies lie down.

On Vinegar Hill those rebels did camp,
They thought by their numbers our army would cram,
But we boldly attacked them and forced them to yield
And five hundred Croppies lay dead on the field
Derry down down, Derry down down, Derry down down,
Croppies lie down.

The bold Gerald Dondas (David Dundas?) Is a man of great
might,
He attacked all the croppies just after daylight,
He threw up his bombshells and bullets so fast,
And put the damn croppies all flying at last.
Derry down down, Derry down down, Derry down down,
Croppies lie down.

Colonel Campbell commanding the First Light Brigade,
He forced up the hill when the attack it was made
And planted his cannon in such a fine spot,
And made the white croppies to curse his grape shot
Derry down down, Derry down down, Derry down down,
Croppies lie down.

These rebels they thought our commanders seduced
They sent out McManus with a white flag of truce
They thought that the army good terms they would give,
But the answer was 'Croppies we won't let you live.'
Derry down down, Derry down down, Derry down down,
Croppies lie down.

Then Esmond and Kaol with Harvey and Hay unto General
Moor were given up the next day
They were tried by court martial then quickly we slew
And that put an end to the blood thirsty crew
Derry down down, Derry down down, Derry down down,
Croppies lie down.

Song 1: Croppies Lie Down. Croppies were supporters of the United Irishmen. This anti-rebel song celebrates the defeat of the United Irishmen, sung by the Orange Order reasserting British rule and Protestant loyalty to the crown.

Full song: https://youtu.be/T-uB5HHJ_xM?list=TLPQMjgxMjIwMjJ0YAeOIT5pjA&t=6

About: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croppies_Lie_Down

The Sash my father wore

It is old but it is beautiful and its colours they are fine
It was worn at Derry, Aghrim, Enniskillen and the Boyne
My father wore it as a youth in bygone days of yore
So on the 12th I proudly wear the sash my father wore.

Here I am a loyal Orangeman, just came across the sea
For singing and for dancing, I hope that I'll please thee
I can sing and dance with any man, as I did in days of yore
And on the 12th I long to wear the sash my father wore.

It's now I'm going to leave you, good luck to you I say
And when I'm on the ocean, for me I hope you'll pray
I'm going to my native land, to a place they call Dromore
Where on the 12th I'll always wear the sash my father wore.

[Older verses]

So I am an Ulster Orangeman, from Erin's isle I came
To see my British brethren, all of honour and of fame
And to tell them of my forefathers, who fought in days of yore
That I might have the right to wear the sash my father wore.

For those brave men who crossed the Boyne have not fought
or died in vain
Our unity, religion, laws and freedom to maintain
If the call should come we'll follow the drum and cross that
river once more
That tomorrow's Ulstermen may wear the sash my father
wore.

Song 2: The Sash My Father Wore. Part of the Orange songs that reaffirm loyalty through public acknowledgement of the historic debt owed to forefathers.

Full song: <https://youtu.be/hn8KDLxF5dM>

Dolly's Brae

It being the twelfth day of July in the year of forty-nine,
Five hundred of our Orange men together did combine
In memory of King William on that bright and glorious day
To march around Lord Roden's park and over Dolly's Brae
To march around Lord Roden's park and over Dolly's Brae.

And when we got to Weirsbridge sure it was a glorious sight
To see so many Orangemen all ready for to fight
To march around the old remains our music sweet to play
And the tune we played was the Protestant Boys right on to
Dolly's Brae
And the Tune we played was the Protestant Boys right on to
Dolly's Brae

Just then two priests came up to us and to Mr Biers did say:
"Come turn your men the other road and never cross Dolly's
Brae."

"Begone, begone, you papish dogs, you've hardly time to
pray

Before we throw your carcasses right over Dolly's Brae
Before we throw your carcasses right over Dolly's Brae."

And when we came to that great hill they were ranked on
every side
And offering up their papish prayers for help to stem the tide
But we loosed our guns upon them and we quickly won the
day
And we knocked five hundred papishes right over Dolly's Brae
And we knocked five hundred papishes right over Dolly's Brae

So now my song at last I'll end, my pen I will throw down,
And wish success to every man supports the British Crown
And generations yet unborn will mind this place of yore
For we named the spot King William's Ridge and Dolly's Brae
no more.

For we named the spot King William's Ridge and Dolly's Brae
no more.

Song 3: Dolly's Brae. Sectarian tension ran high in the late 1840's following the Famine and the Young Ireland rebellion. 'Dolly's Brae' entered folklore as a celebration of Protestants asserting their supremacy through the right to march.

Full song: <https://youtu.be/ghxoEH0jj4Y>

God Bless our Union Jack

Has Ulster lost the courage of the glorious days of yore?
Have they lost the valiant spirit which their mighty fathers wore
They always travelled forward, whilst we go tamely back
Shall we look on whilst traitors destroy our Union Jack?

Glory, Glory Alleluia!
Glory, Glory Alleluia!
Glory, Glory Alleluia!
God bless our Union Jack!

Shall we listen to the treason of sedition nurtured knaves
And condemn our loyal kindred to the fate of wretched slaves
Our fathers travelled forward; shall we go tamely back?
Shall we look on while traitors destroy our Union Jack?

Glory, Glory Alleluia!
Glory, Glory Alleluia!
Glory, Glory Alleluia!
God bless our Union Jack!

Shall we be crushed like vermin, beneath the rebel's (Gladstone) wheel?
That they may live in history as the hero of Repeal?

Shall we no more go forward but tamely travel back?
Shall we look on while the traitors they destroy the Union Jack?

Glory, Glory Alleluia!
Glory, Glory Alleluia!
Glory, Glory Alleluia!
God bless our Union Jack!

We never shall surrender the glories of the past,
But shoulder still to shoulder protect them to the last
We must and shall travel forward, we'll never travel back
Forever I forever we shall hoist our Union Jack

Glory, Glory Alleluia!
Glory, Glory Alleluia!
Glory, Glory Alleluia!
Forever and forever we will hoist our Union Jack!

Song 4: God Bless Our Union Jack. To the tune of "The Battle of the Republic" (abolitionist Julia Ward Howe), timidity in the face of adversity (Repeal, Home Rule etc) is juxtaposed with determined and heroic actions of Ulster Scot ancestors.

Full song: <https://youtu.be/b1lub8iTDb0?t=9>

The Ballad of Billy McFadzean

Let me tell you a story, of honour and glory
Of a young Belfast soldier, Billy McFadzean by name
For King and for Country, Young Billy died bravely
And won the VC, on the fields of the Somme

Chorus:

So let us remember that brave Ulster soldier
The VC he won the young life that he gave
For duty demanding his courage outstanding
Private Billy McFadzean of the U.V.F.

Gone Like the snowflake, that melts on the river
Gone like the first rays, of days early dawn
Like the foam from the fountain
Like the mist from the mountain
Young Billy McFadzean's dear life has gone

Chorus:

So let us remember, that brave Ulster soldier
The VC he won, the young life that he gave
For duty demanding, his courage outstanding
Private Billy McFadzean of the U.V.F.

Now Billy lies only, were the red Flanders poppy
In wildest profusion, paints the field of the brave
No piper recalling, his deeds all forgotten
For Billy McFadzean, has no known grave

Chorus:

So let us remember, that brave Ulster soldier
The VC he won, the young life that he gave
For duty demanding, his courage outstanding
Private Billy McFadzean of the U.V.F.

Song 5: The Ballad of Billy McFadzean The blood sacrifice at the Somme by UVF members of the Ulster 36th Division was an important element in reinvigorating Unionism in the 20th Century by reminding succeeding generations of the long tradition of sacrifice. During the Troubles, loyalist paramilitaries appropriated the memory of teenage war hero Billy McFadzean to legitimise their actions and raise money support (£) for their actions.

Full song: <https://youtu.be/ldq!pzx5PCK>

PARALLEL HISTORIES

Nationalist Songs

Song 1: The Sean-Bhean bhocht

Full song: <https://youtu.be/JpOjrBWU35w?list=TLPQMjgxMjIwMjJ0YAeOIT5pjA>

About: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sean-Bhean_bhocht Conrad Keening the Nation HQ.pdf

Song 2: Arthur McBride/The Recruiting Sergeant

Full song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBGkhPx529g> (Paul Brady)

Song with lyrics on screen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bE4x9Ulsu1Y>

About: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_McBride

More about how Paul Brady broke with tradition in recording his version of the song:

<https://youtu.be/cpgU6ly5GIY>

Song 3: A Nation Once Again.

Full song: <https://youtu.be/RN1YDcXHhDI> (Wolfe Tones live)

Song with lyrics on screen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0d0s_K96yk

About: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Nation_Once_Again

Lyrics: https://www.irishsongs.com/lyrics.php?Action=view&Song_id=9

Song 4: Go on home British soldiers, go on home

Full song: <https://youtu.be/40igFDaPDBc> (Wolfe Tones)

Song with lyrics on screen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NieKfRjgy5U>

Lyrics: <https://genius.com/The-wolfe-tones-go-on-home-british-soldiers-lyrics>

Song 5: The Men Behind the Wire

Full song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvGC6QroaEM> (The Barleycorn/Paddy McGuigan)

Song with lyrics on screen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3vnPYaSm0A>

About: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Men_Behind_the_Wire

Lyrics: <https://genius.com/The-wolfe-tones-the-men-behind-the-wire-lyrics>

PARALLEL HISTORIES

Nationalist Songs

Song 1: Croppies Lie Down.

Full song: https://youtu.be/T-uB5HHJ_xM?list=TLPQMjgxMjIwMjJ0YAeOIT5pjA&t=6

About: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croppies_Lie_Down

Song 2: The Sash My Father Wore

Full song: <https://youtu.be/hn8KDLxF5dM>

Song with lyrics on screen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxF10ztBPh4>

About: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sash

Lyrics: <https://genius.com/Liam-clancy-the-sash-my-father-wore-lyrics>

Song 3: Dolly's Brae

Full song: <https://youtu.be/ghxoEH0jj4Y>

Song with lyrics on screen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghxoEH0jj4Y>

About: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolly%27s_Brae_conflict

Lyrics: <http://mudcat.org/@displaysong.cfm?SongID=1623>

Song 4: God Bless Our Union Jack

Full song: <https://youtu.be/b1lub8iTDb0?t=9> (plus interesting accompanying footage!)

Song with lyrics on screen: <https://youtu.be/b1lub8iTDb0?t=9>

Song 5: The Ballad of Billy McFadzean

Full song: <https://youtu.be/ldqIpx5PCk>

Lyrics: <https://www.justsomelyrics.com/948207/uvf-billy-mcfadzean-lyrics.html>

PARALLEL HISTORIES

Anti-troubles/Aggressive passivism: follow up listening

The Troubles left NI divided along sectarian lines. Music had helped shaped the identity of each side, raising funds and gathering support that fuelled the conflict. Music was also to play a part in the Peace Process by rejecting violence.

Christy Moore; Minds Locked shut <https://youtu.be/hBcmzaLL95s>

U2; Sunday Bloody Sunday: <https://www.thoughtco.com/rhetorical-analysis-u2s-sunday-bloody-sunday-1690718>

The Cranberries; Zombie: <https://www.afterglowatx.com/blog/2021/10/4/songs-of-protest-how-the-cranberries-defied-irish-violence-with-zombie>

Paul McCartney; Give Ireland back to the Irish: https://youtu.be/P_O3cCs9qmM

Paul Brady; This Ireland: <https://youtu.be/u3L1tM6OSh0> ;

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Island_\(Paul_Brady_song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Island_(Paul_Brady_song)).