
Synopsis

An Irish Navy describes his working and social life; and thinks nostalgically of Ireland.

Text

Its first when I set out on tramp I was but very young
My mind was bent on merriment, on joy, and on fun
My mind was bent on merriment and ne'er could give it o'er
For still my mind was quite content on Paddy's green shamrock shore
 With my laddy fal de de with my lady fal de do
 With my lady fal de de, we are navy boys you know

When I became a navy man I own I was dismayed
To see our noble backmen on them a while I gazed
Likewise our noble barrow men who ne'er could give it o'er
In hopes that they would meet again on Paddy's green shamrock shore

On Monday morning when we go out, our work to begin
The noise of our tools brave boys, does make the valleys ring
We will drive our piles and bore our holes, by one, by toe, by four
The best of our navigators come from Paddy's green shamrock shore

When the rain it does come on we are happy then as kings
We are off into the ale-house and the bell it loudly rings
We call for liquor of the best and our bumpers they run o'er
The very first toast that we drink is to Paddy's green shamrock shore

When we meet a bad landlady, the truth to you I tell
We do our whole endeavours it for to please her well
But at the pay we slope her, as we've oft done before
And with her money drink a health to Paddy's green shamrock shore

When we meet a bonny lass we give to her a kiss
We take her in our arms be boys, I own it is no miss;
We take her in our arm and kiss her o'er and o'er
But still the one that we like best is on Paddy's green shamrock shore

Come all you roving navys that listen to my song
I hope you'll not be angry if I've said anything wrong;
I own I am a navy bold, the truth I will deplore
Many a happy day I spent on Paddy's green shamrock shore

Glossary:

Tramp	To travel on foot in search of work; especially navvying.
Backmen	Not known. Possibly banksmen (see Bar335)
Bumper	Drinking vessel
Slope	To quit lodgings without paying

Source of Text: Bodleian Library, *allegro* Catalogue of Ballads; [Firth b.34\(203\)](#)

Music. No tune given

Source of Music: No tune given

Date:

Printer: Not known

Where Printed: Not known

Author : Anonymous

Notes of the Song and Its Historical Background

David Brookes says that Irish navvies were often concentrated at bridge and tunnel workings in order to avoid fighting between them and the English (The Railway Navy: That Despicable Race of Men. ISBN 0 7153 8449 x). The lines "*The noise of our tools brave boys, does make the valleys ring / We will drive our piles and bore our holes, by one, by toe, by four*" are suggestive of that sort of work.

Navvying was very hard work; even seasoned agricultural labourers found that, at first, they could only work part of a day until they had built up the stamina required. This is hinted at in the lines "*When I became a navy man I own I was dismayed / To see our noble backmen on them a while I gazed / Likewise our noble barrow men who ne'er could give it o'er*"