

## The Blantyre Explosion

The musical score is written on four staves in a 3/4 time signature with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes and chords are as follows:

- Staff 1: Chords Am, Em, C, Em. Notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5.
- Staff 2: Chords G, Am. Notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5.
- Staff 3: Chords Em, C, Em. Notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5.
- Staff 4: Chords G, E, Am. Notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

1. By Clyde's bonnie banks as I sadly did wander  
Among the pit heaps as evening grew nigh,  
I spied a young maiden all dressed in deep mourning  
A weeping and wailing with many a sigh.
2. I stepped up beside her and this I adressed her,  
"Pray, tell me fair maid of your trouble and pain."  
Sobbing and sighing at last she did answer  
"Johnny Murphy, kind sir, was my true lover's name.
3. "Twenty-one years of age full of youth and good looking  
To work down the mines of high Blantyre he came.  
The wedding was fixed all the guests were invited  
That calm summer's evening my Johnny was slain.
4. The explosion was heard all the women and children  
With pale anxious faces made haste to the mine.  
When the truth was made known the hills rang with their mourning,  
Three hundred and ten young miners were slain.
5. Now husbands and wives and sweethearts and brothers  
That Blantyre explosion they'll never forget  
And all you young miners who hear my sad story  
Shed a tear for the victims who were laid to their rest."

---

"The Blantyre Explosion" is a Scottish song about the Blantyre mining disaster, which happened on the morning of October 22, 1877, in Blantyre, Scotland. It was Scotland's worst ever mining accident. Pits No. 2 and No. 3 of William Dixon's Blantyre Colliery were the site of an explosion which killed 207 miners, the youngest being a boy of 11. It was known that firedamp was present in the pit and it is likely that this was ignited by a naked flame. (Firedamp is flammable gas found in coal mines, especially coalbed methane. It is particularly found in areas where the coal is bituminous.) The accident left 92 widows and 250 fatherless children. Blantyre was also the scene of two further disasters in 1878 and 1879. The exact origin of the song is unknown, but it is thought to have been collected by A. L. Lloyd from an unnamed local singer. The text first appears in A. L. Lloyd's 1951 book **Come All Ye Bold Miners**.

It appears in the **Roud Folk Song Index** as #1014.

It was printed in

Laws' **American Ballads from British Broad-sides: A guide for students and collectors of traditional song** (1957) (as "The High Blantyre Explosion"), Morton's **Folksongs Sung in Ulster** (1970), Morton's **Come Day, Go Day, God Send Sunday** (1973), Korson's **Pennsylvania Songs and Legends** (1949) (as "The High Blanter Explosion"), MacColl's **Personal Choice** (1962).

It was recorded by Ewan MacColl on **Shuttle and Cage** (1957), **Steam Whistle Ballads** and **The Real MacColl**, The Ian Campbell Folk Group on **Coaldust Ballads** (1965), Christy Moore on **Ordinary Man** (1985).