

## The Boys of Wexford

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The chords are indicated above the notes: G, C, G, D7, G, D7, Em; G, C, G, D7, G, D7, G, D7, C; G, C, Am, Em, G, C, G, D7; G, D7, G.

1. In comes the captain's daughter, the captain of the Yeos,  
Saying, "Brave United Irishmen, we'll ne'er again be foes.  
A thousand pounds I'll give to you, and fly from home with thee  
And dress myself in man's attire, and fight for liberty!"  
We are the boys of Wexford, who fought with heart and hand  
To burst in twain the galling chain, and free our native land!  
**Chorus** (*tune of last 4 lines of the verse*)  
    We are the boys of Wexford, who fought with heart and hand  
    To burst in twain the galling chain, and free our native land!
  
2. "I want no gold, my maiden fair, to fly from home with thee;  
Your shining eyes will be my prize - more dear then gold to me.  
I want no gold to nerve my arm to do a true man's part  
To free my land I'd gladly give the red drops from my heart."  
**Chorus**
  
3. And when we left our cabins, boys, we left with right good will,  
To see our friends and neighbours that were at Vinegar Hill!  
A young man from our ranks, a cannon he let go;  
He slapt it into Lord Mountjoy - a tyrant he laid low!  
**Chorus**
  
4. We bravely fought and conquered at Ross, and Wexford town;  
And, if we failed to keep them, 'twas drink that brought us down.  
We had no drink beside us on Tubberneering's day,  
Depending on the long bright pike, and well it worked its way!  
**Chorus**

5. They came into the country our blood to waste and spill;  
But let them weep for Wexford, and think of Oulart Hill!  
'Twas drink that still betrayed us - of them we had no fear;  
For every man could do his part like Forth and Shelmalier!

**Chorus**

6. My curse upon all drinking! It made our hearts full sore:  
For bravery won each battle, but drink lost ever more.  
And if, for want of leaders, we lost at Vinegar Hill,  
We're ready for another fight, and love our country still!

**Chorus**

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This song commemorates the Irish Rebellion of 1798 and, more specifically, the battle at Vinegar Hill outside Enniscorthy, County Wexford, on June 21, 1798 when over 15,000 British soldiers launched an attack. The Irish were routed and disbursed. The ballad lyrics were composed by Patrick Joseph McCall with music by Arthur Warren Darley, who also composed other Wexford ballads, "BooLavogue" and "Kelly the Boy from Killanne". Some sources say that the tune was traditional before the battle. The "Yeos" mentioned in the first verse were the yeoman cavalry unit of the British army who fled the battle of Oulart Hill on May 27, 1798 after their first casualty. Of the attacking militia, only four escaped alive.

The tune is a typically heroic one and I always use it as an instrumental. I learned it from a recording by Bill Spence with Fennig's All-Star String Band. The Clancy Brothers also recorded it on their 1995 album, **Older But No Wiser** and the Wolfe Tones recorded it on their debut 1965 album **The Foggy Dew**.

There must be a bawdy parody of this in Ireland that I don't know about. When I was talking to some fellows from Wexford and asked them if they knew the words because I didn't have any (at that time) their answer was "Jasus, you can't sing that in mixed company!" I haven't found those words yet.

I play this tune in a medley with:

The Flowers of Edinburgh

Gary Owen

Irish Washerwoman, The

Scotland the Brave

All of which are in this section.