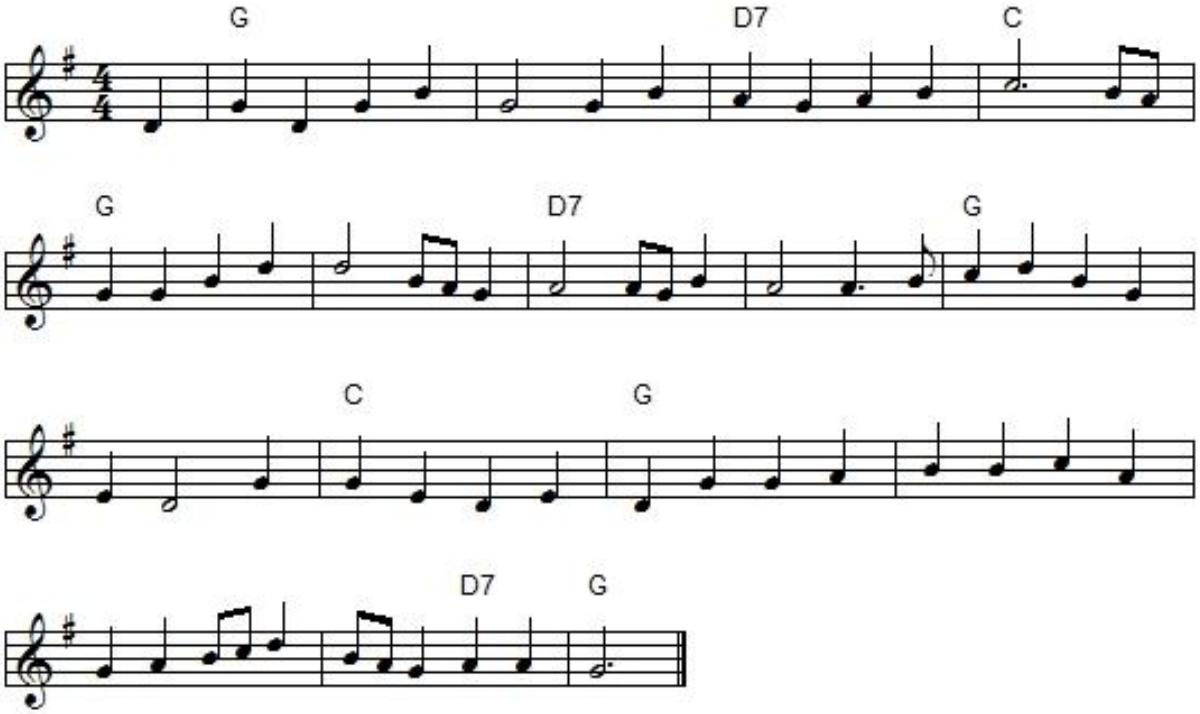
Claudy Banks



1. 'Twas on one summer's evening all in the month of May,
   Down by a flow'ry garden where Betsy did stray.
   I overheard a damsel in sorrow to complain,
   All for her absent lover that ploughs the raging main.

2. I stepped up to this fair maid and put her in surprise,
   She owned she did not know me, I being all in disguise.
   I said, "My charming creature, my joy and heart's delight,
   How far have you to travel this dark and rainy night?"

3. "Away, kind sir, to the Claudy banks if you will please to show,
   Pity a poor girl distracted for there I have to go.
   I am in search of a young man and Johnny is his name,
   And on the banks of Claudy I'm told he does remain."

4. "If Johnny he was here this night he would keep me from all harm
   But he's in the field of battle all in his uniform,
   He is in the field of battle his foes he will destroy,
   Like a roaring King of honour all in the wars of Troy.

5. "It was six months or better since my Johnny left the shore,
   He's a-cruising the wide ocean where the foaming billows roar,
   He's a-cruising the wide ocean for honour or for gain,
   But I'm told his ship got wreck-ed all on the coast of Spain."

6. When Betsy heard this dreadful news she fell into despair,
   In a-wringing of her hands and a-tearing of her hair.
   "Since Johnny has gone and left me no man on earth I'll take,
   Down in some lonesome valley I'll wander for his sake."

7. Young Johnny hearing her say so he could no longer stand,
   He fell into her arms crying, "Betsy, I'm that man,
   I am that faithful young man and whom you thought was slain,
   And since we met on Claudy banks we'll never part again."

"Claudy Banks", in Gaelic "*Bruach an Chladaigh*", also known as "The Plain of Boccarough", "Portaferry Boys" or "The Roving Galway Boy" is an Irish air in 2/4 or 4/4 time in F Major (O'Sullivan/Bunting) or D Dorian (O'Neill, Stanford/Petrie), D Major (Stanford/Petrie) or, in this case, G major. The parts are played: one part (O'Neill, Stanford/Petrie) or AABBC (O'Sullivan/Bunting).

Claudy is a village on the right bank of a small stream called the Faughan, which rises in the Sperrin mountains and flows into the River Foyle just before it enters Lough Foyle in County Londonderry.

Claudy Banks belongs to a group of songs known as "Broken Token Ballads". Quite often the "token" has disappeared from the text (as here) but it is usually a ring which was broken and each of the lovers kept half while the young man went off to war. He comes back in disguise and attempts to test his lover's fidelity. When he has done so and she proves constant he reveals himself.

It was printed in O'Neill's **Music of Ireland: 1850 Melodies** (1903) and Stanford/Petrie's **Complete Collection** (1905). Steve Roud included "Claudy Banks" in **The New Penguin Book of English Folk Songs** (2012). It is the **Roud Folk Song Index** as #266.

The Young Tradition sang "Banks of Claudy" on their debut album of 1966 **The Young Tradition**.

"Claudy Banks" is one of the best-known songs from the repertoire of the Copper Family. They sang it in a recording made by Peter Kennedy at Cecil Sharp House that was published in 1960 on **A Pinch of Salt** and later on their albums **A Song for Every Season** (1971), **Coppersongs: A Living Tradition** (1988) and **Coppersongs 3: The Legacy Continues** (1998).

The version given here is the melody used by the Coppers and The Young Tradition.

The **Second Suite in F for Military Ban**d (Op. 28, No. 2) is Gustav Holst's second and last suite for concert band. Movement 1 is "March: Morris dance (Glorishears), Swansea Town, Claudy Banks".