

Kelly the Boy from Killane

Musical score for "Kelly the Boy from Killane" in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a boxed 'A' and has chords A, D, A, and E7 above it. The second staff has a first ending bracketed with '1. A' and a second ending with '2. A', followed by a boxed 'B' and chords D and A. The third staff has chords D, E7, A, and D above it. The fourth staff has chords A, E7, and A above it.

1. What's the news, what's the news, O me bold Shelmalier
With your long barrel guns from the sea?
Say, what wind from the south brings a messenger here
With this hymn of the dawn for the free?
Goodly news, goodly news do I bring youth of Forth
Goodly news shall I hear Bargy man.
For the boys march at morn from the south to the north
Led by Kelly, the boy from Killane.
2. Tell me, who is the giant with the gold curling hair,
He who rides at the head of your band?
Seven feet is his height with some inches to spare
And he looks like a king in command.
O me boys that's the pride of the bold Shelmalier
'Mongst our greatest of heroes a man
Fling your beavers aloft and give three ringing cheers
For John Kelly, the boy from Killane.
3. Enniscorthy is in flames and old Wexford is won
And tomorrow the barrow will cross
On the hill o'er the town we have planted a gun
That will batter the gateway to Ross.
All the Forth men and Bargy men will march o'er the heath
With brave Harvey to lead in the van
But the foremost of all in the grim gap of death
Will be Kelly, the boy from Killane.

4. But the gold sun of freedom grew darkened at Ross
And it set by the Slaney's red wave...
And poor Wexford stripped naked hung high on a cross
With her heart pierced by traitors and knaves.
Glory-o, Glory-o to her brave men who died
For the cause of long down-trodden man.
Glory-o to Mount-Leinster's own darling and pride
Dauntless Kelly, the boy from Killane.

"Kelly the Boy from Killane" is an Irish air in 4/4 time and D Major. The parts are played AABB. John Moulden identifies this song as written by a Dublin City Councillor and Patrick Street publican, Patrick Joseph McCall (1861-1919), a prolific songwriter of mostly patriotic ballads whose ballad sheet collection is in the National Library of Ireland. Moulden states his style of writing was informed by ballad sheets and therefore is missing from "polite" anthologies.

John Kelly was a merchant's son from Kilane, County Wexford and a man of impressive size, seven feet or more. He participated in the rising of 1798, fighting under the command of Bagnal Harvey, one of the Protestant leaders of the rebellion. Kelly led the men from the Wexford areas of Bargy, Forth, Shelmalier and the Barony of Bantry in Harvey's attack on the town of New Ross. The United Irishman captured the town, rested, and lost it again and several hundred croppies were lost in the battle. Kelly was badly wounded in the engagement and was captured at his sister's house where he was recovering. Subsequently he was tried at a court-martial and convicted; a story goes it was on the evidence of a yeoman sergeant, a neighbor whose life he had saved some days before. He was hanged on Wexford bridge, his trunk thrown into the water and his head spiked over the courthouse to rot after being kicked about. Kelly's head was eventually recovered by friends who brought it to Killane, where, much later a monument to his memory was erected.

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It was recorded by Leo Rowsome on **Classics of Irish Piping** (1938), Makem & Clancy, Luke Kelly, The Dubliners, The Irish Ramblers, The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, Jackie O'Brien, Brian Roebuck, Blackthorn, Paddy Murphy, Johnny Denegan, The Davitts, The Makem Brothers and others.