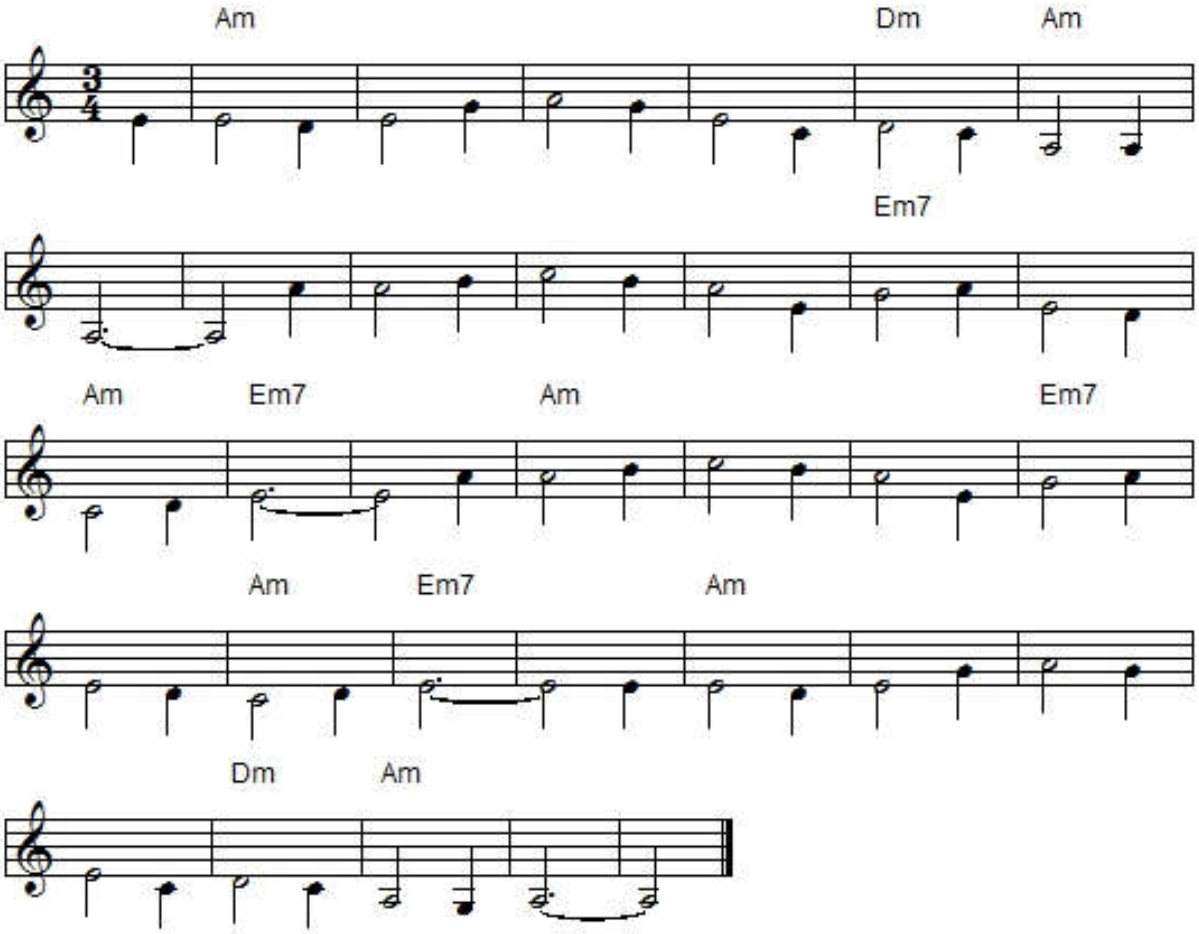
Skibbereen



1. Oh father dear, I oft-times hear
you speak of Erin's isle,
Her lofty hills, her valleys green,
her mountains rude and wild.
They say she is a lovely land
wherein a saint might dwell.
So why did you abandon her,
the reason to me tell.

2. Oh son, I loved my native land
with energy and pride
Till a blight came o'er the praties;
my sheep, my cattle died.
My rent and taxes went unpaid,
I could not them redeem
And that's the cruel reason why
I left old Skibbereen.

3. Oh well do I remember
that bleak December day.
The landlord and the sheriff came
to take us all away.
They set my roof on fire with their
cursed English spleen.
I heaved a sigh and bade goodbye
to dear old Skibbereen.

4. Your mother too, God rest her soul,
fell on the stony ground.
She fainted in her anguish seeing
desolation 'round.
She never rose but passed away
from life to immortal dream.
She found a quiet grave, me boy,
in dear old Skibbereen.

5. And you were only two years old
and feeble was your frame.
I could not leave you with my friends
for you bore your father's name.
I wrapped you in my cóta mór
in the dead of night unseen.
I heaved a sigh and bade goodbye
to dear old Skibbereen.

6. Oh father dear, the day will come
when in answer to the call
All Irish men of freedom stern
will rally one and all.
I'll be the man to lead the band
beneath the flag of green
And loud and clear we'll raise the cheer,
Revenge for Skibbereen!

"Skibbereen", in Gaelic "*An Sciobairín*", also known as "The Auld Skibbereen", "Little Boat Harbour" or "Old Skibbereen" is a song in A minor.

The region around Skibbereen experienced a significant famine in the years 1845–52, a time referred to as The Great Hunger or Great Famine (Irish: *an Gorta Mór*). The Skibbereen Heritage Centre estimates that 8,000 to 10,000 victims of the Famine are buried in the famine burial pits of Abbeystrewery cemetery close to the town.

The song, also known as "Dear Old Skibbereen", takes the form of a conversation between a father and a son, in which the son asks his father why he fled the land he loved so well. The father then describes the devastation of the famine and the landlords and officials.

The first known publication of the song was in a 19th-century publication, Noonan's **The Irish Singer's Own Book** (1880), where the song was attributed to Patrick Carpenter, a poet and native of the village of Skibbereen, in County Cork, Ireland.

It was published in 1915 by Herbert Hughes who wrote that it had been collected in County Tyrone and that it was a traditional song.

It was recorded by John Lomax from Irish immigrants in Michigan in the 1930s.

It was recorded by The Dubliners on **Greatest Hits, Ireland's Prodigal Sons and Plain and Simple** (1973), Wolfe Tones on **Rifles of the I.R.A.** (1969), James Galway And The Chieftains on **Over The Sea To Skye: The Celtic Connection** and Sinéad O'Connor with The Chieftains on **Long Journey Home** and others.