

LUCY WAN Lyrics

Chris Sherburn & Denny Bartley NOE03

The Bantry Girl's Lament

Who will plough the fields now who will sow the corn
Who will mind the sheep now and keep them neatly shorn
And the stack that's in the haggard, un-threshed it will remain
Since Johnny went a threshing all in the wars of Spain.

And the Girls from the Bánóg in sorrow may retire
And the piper and his bellows go home and blow his fire
For Johnny lovely Johnny is sailing o'er the main
Away with other patriots to fight the king of Spain.

The boys they'll surely miss him when moneymore comes around
And they grieve their brave captain is nowhere to be found
The peelers must stand idle, against their will and grain
Since the gallant lad that gave them work now peels the king of Spain.

At wakes and hurling matches your likes we'll seldom see
'Till you return back home again a stórin gheal mo chroí
won't you trouble those buckeens who show us great disdain
Because our eyes are not as bright as those you'll see in Spain

If cruel faith does not permit our Johnny to return
This heavy loss we Bantry girls will never cease to mourn
We'll resign ourselves to our sad loss and die in grief and pain
Since Johnny died for freedom's sake, in the foreign land of Spain

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Since Johnny went a threshing, all in the wars of Spain
Johnny died for freedom's sake, in the foreign land of Spain.

I heard the Clancy's sing this years ago but it was Jimmy Crowley's version that made me want to do it.

Having checked out a few researchers on this, the song appears to be about what's called The Peninsula War. This is dated 1808 to 1814 and was caused by Napoleon Bonaparte, who forced the then king of Spain, Ferdinand VII, to abdicate and handed power to his own brother, Joseph Bonaparte. It would also appear that Johnny was fighting with the British forces against Joseph if this is true.

I feel that a few translations/explanations of words in the text above are also needed.

1st verse – A haggard is a garden or a threshing field.

2nd verse – Bánóg is pronounced Bawnoag and here means a patch of green ground (Literal translation is young white, but your guess is as good as mine on that!).

3rd verse – Moneymore according to the Clancy's should be Mí an Fhomhair (me on oar, phonetically) and would be harvest time.

4th verse – Stórin gheal mo chroí means bright love of my heart. Phonetically, storeen gal mo cree. Buckeens is a term for young men with little to do.