

Robin Williamson, Lough Foyle

Words RW, music trad Irish: Nancy's Whiskey 1978

At age 14 they gave us training
To number off by threes and give salutes
To clean and fire the Lee and Enfield
To answer smartly sir and shine the boots
Me and all the other poor bastards
Glengarry bonnets on at bugle call
I never thought I looked good in khaki
It hurt the pride as well as it scratched the balls
I volunteered for the signals section
To work the radios was a skivers joy
and on manoeuvres I'd twist the orders
and put confusion on the soldier boys

To Northern Ireland for summer training
Near to Lough Foyle not far from Derry town
To get the feel of the regular army
and generally act the bloody clown
To eat melodious beans and gravy
To sleep on old grey blankets stiff with stains
and on the cary in the morning
To squat in rows like cows with labor pains

Me and some lads broke out one evening
Climbed through the wire and down the lough beside
We spied some fishers in their long boats
Casting nets out on the silvery tide
They soon pulled shoreward and we got to talking
To row us over the water they'd agree
They hoist us dry shod in the boat beside them
And way across the watery waves went we
Cross to Greencastle in Southern Ireland
A street of cottages set end to end
A couple of churches and several boozers
Where we fell to drinking with our Irish friends

The best black porter, strong beer and whiskey
We had a bevy there as drunk as lords
and all skylarking and cutting capers
Till that old church clock it chimed for four
The fishers rowed us back over the water
and went to fish upon the morning rise
But we were drunk and devoid of caution
and we were halted climbing back through the wire
and me and the lads were all defaulted
and straight away upon fatigues were led
To double at our every duty
With our rifles held above our heads

Bur my good luck was not all departed
I got infected in both the ears
Some kind of hole in the two of my ear drums
Till not a single order I could hear
I sadly smiled and looked downhearted
While they could curse and shout and rage
and that's the way I would end a story
When I was 14 years of age