

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Building Up and Tearing England Down

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I have won the hero's name
With McAlpine and Costain
FitzMurphy Ash and Wimpey's gangs
I've been often on the road
On me way to draw the dole
There's nothing left to do for Johnny Laing
I used to think that God
Made the mixer pick and hod
So that Paddy might know hell above the ground
I've had gangers big and tough
Tell me tales old and rough *
When you're building up and tearing England down.

In the tunnel underground
A young Limerick man was found
He was built into the New Victoria Line
When the bonus gang had past
Sticking from the concrete cast
Was the face of little Charlie Joe Devine
A ganger named McGirck
Made Paddy hate the work
When a gas-main burst he flew off the ground
Oh they swore he said gone slack
I won't be here untill I'm back
Keep on building up and tearing England down

I remember Jack McCann
That poor old stuttering man
Felt the better for his stammer in a week
And that poor old stuttering man
He fell from a shuttering jam
And was never ever more
Inclined to speak.
No more like Robin Hood will he roam down Cricklewood
Or dance around the pubs of Camden Town
Oh let no man complain
Sure no Pat can die in vain
When you're building up and tearing England down.

I remember Carrier Jack
With his hod upon his back
He swore he'd one day set the world on fire

But his face they'd never seen
Filth! his shovel it cut clean
Through the middle of a big high tension wire
I saw the big McCall
From a big flyover fall
Into a concrete mixer spinning round
O it was not his intent
He got a fine head of cement
While building up and tearing England down.

So come all you navies bold
Who may think that English gold
Is just waiting to be taken from each sod
Or the likes of you and me
Would ever get an O.B.E.
Or a knighthood for good service to the hod
There's a concrete master race
To keep you in your place
And a ganger man to knock you to the ground
If you ever try to take
Part of what the bosses make
When you're building up and tearing England down.
When you're building up and tearing England down.

Taken from Noel Murphy's C.D. 'A Session'

* Noel seems to sing 'tell me tares ould out rough'

I can't ask him for an explanation as he is away in the north east on some gigs at the moment.)

On his C.D. Noel lists this as traditional and he is pretty careful when researching ownership of material. However, it can't be that old judging by the events and companies described. I spent some time working on the building sites in London in the early sixties and can vouch for the roughness and the humour in the song.

McAlpine and Costain, FitzMurphy Ash and Wimpey's are or were construction firms in the 60's. New Victoria Line---A new underground railway line built in the 60's

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