

# Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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## Kilkelly

Kilkelly  
(Peter Jones)

Kilkelly, Ireland, 18 and 60, my dear and loving son John  
Your good friend the schoolmaster Pat McNamara's so good  
as to write these words down.  
Your brothers have all gone to find work in England,  
the house is so empty and sad  
The crop of potatoes is sorely infected,  
a third to a half of them bad.  
And your sister Brigid and Patrick O'Donnell  
are going to be married in June.  
Your mother says not to work on the railroad  
and be sure to come on home soon.

Kilkelly, Ireland, 18 and 70, dear and loving son John  
Hello to your Mrs and to your 4 children,  
may they grow healthy and strong.  
Michael has got in a wee bit of trouble,  
I guess that he never will learn.  
Because of the dampness there's no turf to speak of  
and now we have nothing to burn.  
And Brigid is happy, you named a child for her  
and now she's got six of her own.  
You say you found work, but you don't say  
what kind or when you will be coming home.

Kilkelly, Ireland, 18 and 80, dear Michael and John, my sons  
I'm sorry to give you the very sad news  
that your dear old mother has gone.  
We buried her down at the church in Kilkelly,  
your brothers and Brigid were there.  
You don't have to worry, she died very quickly,  
remember her in your prayers.  
And it's so good to hear that Michael's returning,  
with money he's sure to buy land  
For the crop has been poor and the people  
are selling at any price that they can.

Kilkelly, Ireland, 18 and 90, my dear and loving son John  
I guess that I must be close on to eighty,  
it's thirty years since you're gone.  
Because of all of the money you send me,  
I'm still living out on my own.

Michael has built himself a fine house  
and Brigid's daughters have grown.  
Thank you for sending your family picture,  
they're lovely young women and men.  
You say that you might even come for a visit,  
what joy to see you again.

Kilkelly, Ireland, 18 and 92, my dear brother John  
I'm sorry that I didn't write sooner to tell you that father passed on.  
He was living with Brigid, she says he was cheerful  
and healthy right down to the end.  
Ah, you should have seen him play with  
the grandchildren of Pat McNamara, your friend.  
And we buried him alongside of mother,  
down at the Kilkelly churchyard.  
He was a strong and a feisty old man,  
considering his life was so hard.  
And it's funny the way he kept talking about you,  
he called for you in the end.  
Oh, why don't you think about coming to visit,  
we'd all love to see you again.

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recorded by Moloney, O'Connell & Keane on "Kilkelly" (1988)

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130 years after his great grandfather left the small village of Kilkelly in  
Co. Mayo, Peter Jones found a bundle of letters sent to him by his father  
in Ireland. The letters tell of family news, births, death, sales of land and  
bad harvests. They remind the son, that he is loved, missed and remembered  
by his family in Ireland. The final letter informs him that his father, whom  
he has not seen for 30 years, has died, the last link with home is broken.  
Peter Jones used these letters to make this song.

The "trouble" in verse two is probably the Fenian rising of 1867.

MJ