

The Irish Deserter

Words and Music: Nigel Harbron

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written on a single line. Above the staff, the following chords are indicated: C, G, C, C, G, C, G. Below the staff, the lyrics are: "I'm I - rish born and bred and the hair on my head is re - d, I've lit - tle time for". The second staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. Above the staff, the following chords are indicated: F, C, F, C, Dm, G, C, G, C. Below the staff, the lyrics are: "Eng - lish Lords, but ev - en less for Hit - ler's hordes and the e - vil that they spre - ad." The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

I'm Irish born and bred
And the hair on my head is red,
I've little time for English lords,
But even less for Hitler's hordes
And the evil that they spread.

When first the war broke out,
My mind was filled with doubt.
Our government sat upon the fence
While others cried: "Let war commence!"
And it looked like being a rout.

I'm poor but free of strife,
With a child and a loving wife.
But in other lands across the sea
It's death for those who disagree -
There's no freedom in their life.

My parents said "Don't go!
To the British what do we owe?
They've ground us all into the dust -
They're not a people you can trust."
But to me, they're not the foe.

So to Larne I made my way,
Then a boat to Liverpool Bay.
I joined the army there and then,
Side by side with Englishmen,
And went abroad without delay.

My name is Coinneach
But everyone called me Mick.
I did my best to join the fight,
Trying hard to suppress my fright,
Far too fraught to feel homesick.

When home I came at last
No-one would forget my past.
Wherever I went in my home town
I was branded a servant of the Crown,
And for me the die was cast.

My wife didn't want to know,
So on the street I had to go
To live a life of hand to mouth
On the narrow lanes of County Louth -
Irish Mick, the great hero.



Ireland was neutral during WWII (much to the annoyance of the British government), but such was the complicated history of the country that thousands of men volunteered to join allied forces, and many saw action around the world.

Unfortunately, their peers back in Ireland were not at all impressed by their fighting 'with the enemy', and rather vilified those souls who did return from the front, labelling them 'deserters', and treating them accordingly. However, in 2013, the Irish government decreed an amnesty for the 'deserters', and even apologised for the nation's past behaviour towards them. Below is a picture of part of Mellifont Abbey, County Louth.

