

THE LIME-KILN FUSILIERS

Shure it was in 'sixty-six,' me boys, I struck for Mallow Town,
For I was sadly unemployed and in finance broken down,
I quickly joined the Labour Queue, Insurance Cards in hand,
And soon before the doctor, boys, in my birthsuit I did stand.
He told me bend and touch my toes, he tried my pulse and heart,
And tested all reactions to see if I was smart;
Then a beet-fork they stuck in my fist, as a voice roared '*Volunteers!*'
And 'twas Paddy Forde, who signed me on – the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.

Oh! I left behind my mother dear, my bonhams and my sow,
Likewise my form for the 'dole' for I cannot draw it now,
And to Comhlucht Siúicre Éireann* my sinew, blood and bones,
Shure I freely gave to toil and heave in mountains of limestones.
My back was well nigh broken, and blisters smote my hands,
As on this poor ould body, boys, this work made fierce demands;
But foreman 'Mac' from Boher, cried: '*Get a move on there my dears,*
This is no Salvation Army, boys, 'tis the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.'

But when the 'yellow' lights flash gaily and the kilns are packed up tight,
Shure I've oftimes paused to listen in the wee hours of the night,
To the factory's powerful humming and the thunderous roar of steam,
And the gay tones of Tom Singleton, as he rails his 'Pulp Floor Team,'
But my thoughts were oftimes shattered by the red lights mocking glare,
And those awful tones as 'Mac' roared out, '*them blooming kilns are bare!*'
Then with beet-fork flashing gaily, I'd breathe a silent prayer,
'*That the Lord above reserves soft beds for the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.'*

We have Finnegan, God bless him, and also Ben O'Dea,
And there's Paddy 'Mac' McAuliffe from a place called Boherbue,
We have engineer John Gannon too, all watchful they maintain,
A constant vigil round the clock to keep those kilns aflame,
And there's stalwart Michael Murphy, from Meelin fair comes he,
And Maurice Daly motors in from the heights of Derryleigh,
Seán Dunne rakes out the fiery flames and longs for cool ice beers,
These are but some of those who serve, in the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.

Upon this pen I must draw rein before it is too late,
To doff our caps at the lady clerks and typists at the 'Gate,'
To the guy who works the weighbridge, the girls in the canteen,
And strike me pink! the gallant nurse who for blisters gave me cream,
My God keep fit 'the bowling men,' the ladies football team,
Heinz-Erin Foods, the fitters, too, who keep up power and steam,
And of course, the electricians and the crew who oil the gears,
And may God keep income tax away from the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.

Now I am sure it was Seán O'Reilly, this tall tale told to me,
Of a conference called by the 'Big Time Brass' of C.S.E.T.,*
There mellow wine flowed freely, and cigar smoke rolled,
'Til time the scene made mellower and men their minds unfold,
Up spoke each Manager his praise for his own factory,
When Mr. Conway's turn came he spoke out manfully,
'*Did we realise 'til now my friends, throughout our whole careers,*
That we never could exist but for – the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.'

Dedicated to those who worked at the Mallow Sugar Factory by Bill Cody, Dromtarriffe, Co. Cork.