

The Hiring Fair

The BAWN FAIR DAYS

An account of the village in 1673 mentions the fairs which were held there. These fairs were held twice a year on the 26th of May and the 26th of November, unless the date fell on a Sunday, and these two dates came to be known locally as "The Bawn Fair Days". Each fair was originally a hiring fair when young men and maidens gathered to seek employment (and farmers gathered to seek employees) for the ensuing six months, or if the boss was a good one, perhaps for years!

The twenty sixth of May is the 'Bawn Fair Day,

If we don't get a holiday we'll all run away.

Where shall we run? Up the back lane!

Who shall we meet? The teacher with the cane!

Sketch (right): The Fair Bawn Lad

THE HIRING FAIR AT HAMILTONSBAWN

Come all you lads and lassies and listen unto me,

Till I relate a sad mistake of my sad destiny;

I went up to the hiring fair to the place called Hamilstonbawn

And for six long months I hired with a man called Tom McCann.

He brought me home that evening and made me lots of tea

He fried me eggs and bacon and then he shook hands with me.

Saying, "you must be good worker and do the best you can,

If you don't I'm afraid you won't be here." says Mr. Tom McCann.

The weather it being stormy all in the wintertime,

I had roads to make and drains to clean, to mix and scatter lime.

My other occupation was to plough and till the land,

If you know what I came through with that Mr. Tom McCann.

When I went to bed at night upon it I would roll,

The fleas they made a strong attack my kidneys for to hole

I shouted Holy Murder! as my skin they tried to tan,

And I pray, "What made me hire with this man called Tom McCann?"

Then calling in for breakfast, oh! nothing could I see

But a pack of hungry children saying, "Is there nothing left for me?"

The butter that was on the plate no human eye could stand

And for tea you need not mention it with Mr. Tom McCann.

My trousers got to wide for me, my coat was rather big

The skin grew tight upon my back, my hair got like a wig.

For days and nights you would have heard me pray the best I can

For Burnhouse or its van to take me from that rascal Tom McCann.

To hear The Hiring Fair and more tunes and music from Hamiltonsbawn [click here to contact us.](#)