



BANTRY
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More Words from the Past



2 |

My lovely Bantry Bay

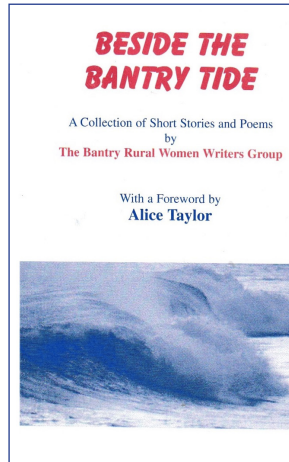
by Gerald McCarthy

In my daydreams I often wander
and a longing in my heart,
To see again my homeland
Though long I've been apart.
Its beauty haunts my very dreams
whilst in my bed I lay
I can see the greenhills tower above
My lovely Bantry Bay.

*Gerald McCarthy (1907 – 1989)
was born and raised in Bantry. He
emigrated, first to Australia, and from
there to England where he married and
raised a family.*

*The following poem was written by
Gerald, while living abroad, expressing
his admiration for Bantry Bay*

I have viewed the scenes of other lands
But nowhere have I seen,
The beauty of this lovely Bay
With its islands bright and green
Years have stretched their weary lengths
And we've grown old and grey,
But how I long to see again
My lovely Bantry Bay.



This poem was one of many written by Bridie (O'Neill) McCarthy who grew up and lived all her life in Ardra, Scart, Bantry.

In late 1990's the Bantry Rural Women Writers Group, under the stewardship of Denise Hall, Writer in Residence with Cork County Libraries, produced a booklet, that borrowed for its title, the name of this poem (written much earlier) by Bridie.

Beside the Bantry Tide

by Bridie McCarthy

The sun rose high
 And the fields were wet with dew
 I strayed beside the Bantry Tide
 Where the woodbine sweetly grew.
 I heard a song among the woods
 Like the thrush at her morning lay
 T'was a comely maid who
 Quietly strayed at the dawning of the day
 God bless you maid I gently said
 As shyly I drew near
 Why do you roam so far from home
 Or have you got no fear.

Kind friend she said my way I went
 Thus far my heart is gay
 I know no care
 As I take the air at the dawning of the day.
 That is years gone by
 And I never sigh
 For my love is now my bride.
 And often talk of that morning walk
 By the pleasant Bantry Tide
 Each passing year brings wealth and cheer
 And we all as light and gay
 As the first glad hour
 In that verdant bower
 At the dawning of the day.

photo credit: Bantry Photo



The Rustic Miner

by Jeremiah McCarthy



The following poem was written by an Irish emigrant, Jeremiah McCarthy, a native of Ardra, Scart, Bantry. It was written in Placeville, Granet Creek, Idaho, USA.

Date Unknown

My home is on the mountain tops
 My beds among the willows
 I envy not the lazy fops
 Who lounge on downy pillows
 What care I for a city life
 For nought to me seems finer
 Than to be free from crowded strife
 And be a rustic miner.
 Let farmers praise of cows and bulls,
 And soldiers talk of fighting,
 And sailors sing cross – yards & hulls,
 And lawyers live by writing,
 But I'll not swap for any trade,
 From governor down to joiner,
 Of hard work I was ne'er afraid,
 For I'm a rustic miner.

And when the sun with radiant hue,
 Peeps o'er the eastern mountain,
 To quaff the mornings' glittering dew,
 On gild the rippling fountain,
 I'm at my work with all my might,
 In search of the glittering shiner,
 Oh where's the man who's more upright,
 Than the handy rustic miner.
 Them who would starve and pine and not,
 Within a murky city,
 While on those hills there's many a spot
 Where gold abounds, Oh what pity
 Those lazy growling crawling elves
 Known to all men as whiners
 Would not step out and help themselves
 And work as honest miners.

He cares' not for the tyrant whelp,
 To treachery, he's a stranger,
 His friends and foes alike he'll help,
 When either are in danger,
 He trusts in God, in Him alone,
 He sees the great assigner,
 Tho every hope in earth be gone,
 God loves the rustic miner."



The Bardic College

A local poem celebrates the O'Daly Bardic college of Kilcrohane: The ruins of the school are still visible in the townland of Dromnea, on the east side of Farranamanagh Lake and overlooking it. The following verses are taken from Frank O'Mahony's article "Kilcrohane and the Holy Ground" in Journal Volume One of Bantry Historical & Archaeological Society.

There's a College and learning and sages divine
 For physical learning and wit most refined
 Built by one O'Daly this College has been
 When he was an Ollamh in Kilcrohane green

His son John O'Daly the famed did admire
 He travelled all regions and played on the lyre:
 He could have built a grand Castle befitting a Queen
 But preferred O'Daly College in Kilcrohane green

Now, this great and illustrious Monarch of Spain
 With his six noble brothers came here to remain;
 They remained until cursed Britain's proud Queen
 Deprived the O'Dalys of Kilcrohane green.

It rises in the mountainside a little rippling rill
 With crystal waters gushing forth, its flowing banks to fill,
 Those banks beneath the traveller's feet enriched with verdure green reflecting
 Sol's pure dazzling rays by Mealagh's winding stream.

Through wild Coomleigh it flows along, enriched by waters green,
 That flow from Mullach Méise down in streamlets sharp and keen,
 Through shady groves of Inchiclough, 'twould make your heart serene
 and rushes down by Donemark, a seaward gushing stream.
 As by those verdant banks I strayed one Autumn evening fair,
 I espied beneath a shady bower a maiden rich and rare
 And now and then upon her cheeks a sparkling tear would gleam
 Just like a pearl undefiled by Mealagh's winding stream.

I said "young lady may I ask what causes your tears to flow
 or is it your father or your friend has left you here in woe"
 She says "no father or no friend can my poor heart reveal
 For my young lover he has fled from Mealagh's winding stream".
 "He scorned to dwell within the land where freedom's burning ray
 Is cast down-trodden in the dust and mouldering in decay
 But soon he will return again to chant a freeman's theme
 And wield a freeman's sword once more by Mealagh's winding stream

Mealagh's Winding Stream

The verses on the page opposite were popular in the Mealagh Valley region through the early 19th century when the Whiteboys or Rokeys as they were sometimes known, were active in agrarian issues in rural Ireland. West Cork was no exception. It shows an admiration for nature but also demonstrates a strong belief in nationalism.



The following local poem was written in 1918, and illustrates the impact of the Great War on civilian life in Bantry, like procuring coal for everyday life.

Biggs' Boat of Coal (1918)

There was talk about conscription
From the pulpit and the stage.
Nothing else but terror of it
Our attention did engage.
Priests and people in the crisis
Fought against it heart and soul,
Now, there's talk of nothing lately,
But Biggs' Boat of Coal.

Charlie Dennis, late of Seskin,
Quoted oft in local rhymes,
Preached in every hole and corner
Of the coming of bad times.
He shook his head and murmured,
And he put it on his soul,
That the U-boats had torpedoed
Our own Biggs' Boat of Coal

Dennis Carthy cheered the Germans
For this glorious naval deed,
But, Ned came cheering 'long the quay
With the happy news indeed.
"Hello, me boys, she's in, she's in."
Miss Brookes said 'Bless me soul'.
Why Charlie told his Float of lies
And that Boat of Coal
Paddy Hurley rushed to the Workhouse steps,
And each one wondered why
That in a little space of time
The Allies' flag flew high.
When the Master of the Union asked
What meant the flag-decked pole.
He was told it was a greeting
For the precious Boat of Coal.

Then all Biggs' motor lorries
Were ordered to the pier
And Charlie's Float and Trolley
Were looked for far and near.
Miss Galvin wheeled across the Square
And began to call the role.
Pat Hurley cried "Ready! Present!"
To unload this Boat of Coal.
The next day we had the music,
And the band began to play
Our own loving tune of fortune
'Welcome Coal to Bantry Bay'.
From Jim Cronin's new melodeon
We were sure to hear some 'ceol'
When he'll learn this little ditty,
Of his master's Boat of Coal.

Oh, may God bless the brave men.
May they shine in honour's roll
Who brought safe into our harbour
Biggs' welcome Boat of Coal.



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