



*Pat Doherty*

# Poets Corner

*It is always pleasing when material for publication is received from someone who has not previously been in touch. A new contributor will bring not just a fresh voice but added hope for the future good health of our poetry feature which has now been 12 years a-growing. Yes, those turbulent teens are looming.*

*Charlie Gaule is our latest signing, an appropriate term to use in this case, given that he is remembered as a handy soccer player, encountered in Garda inter-divisional championships of another age and time. Wexford-based nowadays, Charlie's work is imaginative and humorous. There is also a nice little touch of irreverence which is most welcome.*



## *The Elusive Bearded One*

*by Charlie Gaule*

*The tall Saudi was hiding out in Afghanistan,  
Then, discommoded, he crossed into Pakistan.  
From there he made his way up to Iran,  
And thence to Ireland via the Isle of Man.*

*Where, oh where is Bin Laden?  
Where has the bearded one been hiding?  
Why can't the secret service find that honkey?  
He's bearded, six-foot-six, and riding a donkey!*

*Where oh where is Bin Laden?  
Did he join the Legion of Mary in Dungarvan?  
Did he stay in a B and B in Bonmahon?  
Was he working in Aldi up in Navan?  
Did he manage a piggery in Cavan?*

*Where, oh where is Bin Laden?  
Was he refuelling American planes in Shannon?  
Was he coaching underage--hurling in Ennistymon?  
He was hiding out in Limerick, on the run,  
Until he saw Willie O'Dea waving a gun.*

*Where, oh where is Bin Laden?  
Where has the bearded one been hiding?  
Was he under the Sugar Loaf in a cave?  
Was he down in Knockananna at an all-night rave?  
Twenty five million dollars for his capture!  
How come no one has claimed that treasure?*

*Where, oh where is Bin Laden?  
He's bearded, six-foot-six, and riding a donkey!  
Where, oh where is Bin Laden?*



*It is disappointing that over the course of the dozen years that Poet's Corner has been in existence, very few poems of the ballad form have been submitted for publication. This may be a sign of the times or, perhaps, a perception exists that such material is not suitable for our poetry feature. If this is the case, nothing could be further from the truth. Ballads have always been afforded their rightful place in anthologies and are revered by all true lovers of poetry. As a rule, the poems which occupy the opening pages of the selections used as text books for second-level students are ballads, or at least were until recently. Clearly somebody had the good sense initially to grasp the fact that this genre serves excellently as a hook.*

*In the circumstances, we are delighted that at long last a ballad has been made available. It comes from the pen of Kevin Kilfeather (no stranger to our readers) and is, as we have come to expect, of a high standard. The style is traditional and the theme, exportation, is an old staple of balladeers. Hopefully, others will follow Kevin's example and try their hand.*

## Soil Far from Home

by Kevin Kilfeather

My name's Malone, on soil far from home;  
A bad turn I've done to no man.  
Crops failed on the land and by cruel landlord's hand  
Without pity the evictions began.

My children they wept, my two arms crept  
Sorrowfully, reaching for them.  
Oh that look in their eyes as I told them lies!  
Keeping hope's flicker aflame.

I remember that night, with the fading of light:  
South-west with a bag o'er my back.  
The grain house was full, bad luck to John Bull;  
I stooped and filled up my sack.

In the shadow o' the glen the moon's solar sin;  
Playing Judas, oh thespian of scorn.  
I ne'er heard the shot, as I fell to the dirt,  
Amid thoughts of my children next morn.

We huddled in groups: God curse metal hoops!  
Coffin ships; branded and chained.  
The stench was the smell of the devil's true hell,  
The waves echoed thoughts of my wains.

We carried our cross, some minds were lost:  
Long screams and grown men a-crying.  
We cursed and we spat to ward off the rats  
As they scurried to play games with the dying.

Van Dieman, your soil I've endlessly toiled;  
For sweat the rewards are so few.  
Oh Brendan and John, where now are ye gone?  
To the good lord, if only I knew.

As I lie here in bed, a cripple half dead,  
The Banshee through Ireland she roams:  
Oh Brendan and John, do ye hear her sad song  
Or the digging of soil far from home?