



KelticDead Music

Stories, Tunes and Songs in the Traditions of our Celtic Dead

To the Four Ayrts to Guide Us, and
For the Four Winds to Get Us There!

The mission of the **KelticDead Music** initiative is to find tunes and songs from around the world that have Celtic, Folk, World, Americana, and Seafaring origins, and arrange them into simple sheet music formats for folk musicians to use and share. In addition, the KDM initiative provides the in-depth stories with possible lyrics for a more complete music-education experience.

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My Bonny Light Horseman

Perhaps one of the most influential figures in the 19th Century in both Europe and in America was Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon first appeared into French politics during the French Revolution (1789-1799) and he quickly became a hero in the eyes of the people.

Napoleon Bonaparte (born Napoleone di Buonaparte, 15 August 1769 – 5 May 1821). He was later known by his regnal name Napoleon I, He was Emperor of the French from 18 May 1804 until his first abdication in 1814, with a brief restoration during the Hundred Days in 1815.

Napoleon Bonaparte began his career through a combination of military education and rapid advancement during the French Revolution. Born in Corsica in 1769 to a minor noble family, he attended military schools in Brienne and Paris, graduating as an artillery officer in 1785.

His rise to prominence was catalyzed by several key early achievements:

Siege of Toulon (1793): He successfully commanded artillery to defeat British and royalist forces, earning a promotion to brigadier general at age 24.

13 Vendémiaire (1795): He suppressed a royalist uprising in Paris using artillery, which made him a hero and secured his position with the revolutionary government.

Italian Campaign (1796): Appointed commander of the Army of Italy, he won decisive victories against Austria and its allies, establishing himself as a national military icon.

These successes allowed him to leverage his fame into political power, leading to the Coup of 18 Brumaire in 1799, where he overthrew the Directory and became First Consul of France.



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The French Revolution (1789–1799) was a period of radical political and societal upheaval that ended the monarchy and established the First Republic. Included were ...

A Constitutional Monarchy (1789–1792): The National Assembly abolished feudal privileges (August 4, 1789) and adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (August 26, 1789);

The Republic and Terror (1792–1794): King Louis XVI was executed on January 21, 1793. The Committee of Public Safety, led by Maximilien Robespierre, oversaw the Reign of Terror, ending with Robespierre's execution on July 28, 1794; and

The Directory and Consulate (1795–1799): The revolution concluded with the Coup of 18 Brumaire on November 9, 1799, where Napoleon Bonaparte seized power, establishing the Consulate and effectively ending the revolutionary period.



Made Public Painting of Emperor Napoleon in his study at the Tuileries in 1812. Painting by Jacques-Louis David.

Within weeks of the Vendémiaire uprising, Bonaparte was romantically involved with Joséphine de Beauharnais, the former mistress of Barras.

Josephine had been born in the French colonies in the Lesser Antilles, and her family-owned slaves on sugar plantations. The couple married on 9 March 1796 in a civil ceremony. Bonaparte began to habitually style himself "Napoleon Bonaparte" rather than using the Italian form "Napoleone di Buonaparte."

After a decade of war, France and Britain signed the Treaty of Amiens in March 1802, bringing the Revolutionary Wars to an end. Under the treaty, Britain agreed to withdraw from most of the colonies it had recently captured from France and her allies, and France agreed to evacuate Naples. In April, Bonaparte publicly celebrated the peace and his controversial Concordat of 1801 with Pope Pius VII under which the pope recognized Bonaparte's regime and the regime recognized Catholicism as the majority religion of France.

In May 1802, the Council of State recommended a new plebiscite asking the French people to make "Napoleon Bonaparte" consul for life. (It was the first time his first name was officially used by the regime.)

France had regained her overseas colonies under the Treaty of Amiens but did not control them all. The French National Convention had voted to abolish slavery in February 1794, but in May 1802 Bonaparte reintroduced it in all the recovered colonies except Saint-Domingue and Guadeloupe which were under the control of rebel generals. A French military expedition under Antoine Richepance regained control of Guadeloupe, and slavery was reintroduced there on 16 July 1794.

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Saint-Domingue was the most profitable of the colonies – a major source of sugar, coffee and indigo – but was under the control of the former slave Toussaint Louverture. Bonaparte sent the Saint-Domingue expedition under his brother-in-law General Charles Leclerc to retake the colony, and they landed there in February 1802 with 29,000 men. Although Toussaint was captured and sent to France in July, the expedition ultimately failed due to high rates of disease and a string of defeats against rebel commander Jean-Jacques Dessalines.

In May 1803 Bonaparte acknowledged defeat, and the last 8,000 French troops left the island. The former slaves proclaimed the independent republic of Haiti in 1804.



A map of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 by William Morris.

As the war with Britain began looming again in 1803, Bonaparte realized that his American colony of Louisiana would be difficult to defend. In need of funds, he agreed to sell the Louisiana territories with the United States which doubled size of the United States. The purchase was for \$15 Million.

To advance his position and title as the leader of France as a kingdom, Napoleon arranged a series of overt and covert entanglements with a popular vote in France naming him as Emperor of the French.

On 18 May of 1804 the French senate proclaimed Napoleon Emperor of the French, and they approved a new constitution. The following day, Napoleon appointed 18 of his leading generals as Marshals of the Empire.

Napoleon's coronation, with the participation of Pope Pius VII, took place at Notre Dame de Paris on 2 December 1804. After having been anointed by the pope, Napoleon crowned himself with a replica of Charlemagne's crown.

He then crowned Joséphine, who became the second woman in French history, after Marie de' Medici, to be crowned and anointed. He swore an oath to defend the territory of the republic; to respect the Concordat, freedom of worship, political and civil liberty, as well as the sale of nationalized lands; to raise no taxes except by law; to maintain the Legion of Honour; and to govern in the interests and wellbeing for the glory of the French people.



A made public image of a painting by Francois Gerard of Napoleon's Coronation in 1804.

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On 17 March 1805 Napoleon declared himself King of Italy and crowned himself with the Iron Crown of Lombardy at the Cathedral of Milan. Austria saw this as a provocation because of its own territorial interests in Italy. When Napoleon incorporated Genoa and Liguria into his empire, Austria formally protested against this violation of the Treaty of Lunéville.

By September 1805 Sweden, Russia, Austria, Naples, and the Ottoman Empire had joined Britain in a coalition against France.



A map showing the French Empire at its greatest extent in 1812.

However, there were many more regional battles in countries that has been grouped as “Continental Wars,” and though there were losses, the French victories shifted many of the surrounding countries into satellite states of France. The main concern for Napoleon going into the early 1800s was Austria, Prussia and Russia. By 1812, the greatest extent the French influence extended to the borders of Russia itself, and Napoleon had to make his empire complete.

Consolidations of the French Empire

Napoleon's union with Joséphine had not produced a child, and he decided to secure the dynasty and strengthen its position in Europe by a strategic marriage into one of Europe's major royal houses. In November 1809, he announced his decision to divorce Joséphine, and their marriage was annulled in January 1810.

Napoleon had already commenced negotiations for the marriage of Tsar Alexander's sister Anna, but the tsar responded that she was too young. Napoleon then turned to Austria, and a marriage to the Austrian emperor's daughter, Marie Louise, was quickly agreed. The marriage was formalized in a civil ceremony on 1 April and a religious service at the Louvre on the following day.

The marriage to Marie Louise was widely seen as a shift in French policy towards stronger ties with Austria and away from the already strained relationship with Russia. On 20 March 1811, Marie Louise gave birth to the heir apparent, **François Charles Joseph Napoleon**, King of Rome. His son died of tuberculosis at 21.

Tsar Alexander saw the creation of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, Napoleon's marriage alliance with Austria, and the election of the French Marshal Jean-Baptiste Jules Bernadotte as Crown Prince of Sweden as attempts to contain Russia. In December 1810 Napoleon annexed the Duchy of Oldenburg, which Alexander considered an insult as his uncle was the duke. Alexander responded by allowing neutral shipping into Russian ports and banning most French imports. Russia feared that Napoleon intended to restore the Kingdom of Poland while Napoleon suspected Russia of seeking an alliance with Britain against France.

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In late 1811 Napoleon began planning an invasion of Russia. A Franco-Prussian alliance signed in February 1812 forced Prussia to provide 20,000 troops for the invasion, and in March Austria agreed to provide 30,000 men. Napoleon's multinational grande armée comprised around 450,000 frontline troops of which about a third were native French speakers. Napoleon called the invasion the "Second Polish War," but he refused to guarantee an independent Poland for fear of alienating his Austrian and Prussian allies.



A painting of Napoleon watching the fire of Moscow in September 1812. Painting by Adam Albrecht (1841).

On 24 June Napoleon's troops began crossing the Nieman river into Russian Lithuania with the aim of luring the Russians into one or two decisive battles. The Russians retreated 320 kilometers east to the Dvina river and implemented a scorched earth policy, making it increasingly difficult for the French to forage food for themselves and their horses. On 18 August, Napoleon captured Smolensk with the loss of 9,000 of his men, but the Russians were able to withdraw in good order.

The Russians, commanded by Field Marshall Mikhail Kutuzov, made a stand at Borodino, outside Moscow, on 7 September. The battle resulted in 44,000 Russian and 35,000 French dead, wounded or captured, in one of the bloodiest days of battle in Europe up to that time. The Russians withdrew overnight, and Napoleon later stated, "The most terrible of all my battles was the one before Moscow. The French showed themselves worthy of victory, and the Russians worthy of being invincible"

From Smolensk, Napoleon's army headed for Vilnius, where there was a French garrison of 20,000. In late November, under attack from all sides by Russian forces, the grande "armée" managed to cross the Berezina river on pontoon bridges in temperatures reaching -40°C (-40°F). On 5 December, shortly before arriving in Vilnius, Napoleon left his disintegrating army for Paris. In the following weeks, the remnants of the grande armée, about 75,000 troops, crossed the Nieman into allied territory. Russian military losses in the campaign were up to 300,000, and total military deaths from both sides were up to one million.



A painting of Napoleon withdrawing from Russia. A painting by Adolph Northen.

The French, pursued by the Russians, withdrew from most of Poland and Prussia over the winter of 1812–13 while both sides rebuilt their forces. Sweden and Prussia declared war on France in March 1813. In April Napoleon assumed command of an army of 200,000 troops and defeated the coalition at the battles of Lützen and Bautzen. Britain formally joined the coalition in June followed by Austria in August, but the allies were again defeated in the Battle of Dresden in August. The coalition, however, had a growing advantage in infantry, cavalry, reserves and armaments. In the largest battle of the Napoleonic wars, the coalition was victorious at the Battle of Leipzig (19 October). Although coalition casualties were 54,000 men, the French lost 38,000 killed or wounded and 15,000 taken prisoner. Up to 50,000 more were lost to death, illness and desertion during the French retreat to the Rhine.

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The Frankfurt proposals were peace terms offered by the coalition in November 1813 under which Napoleon would remain emperor but France would be reduced to its "natural frontiers." That meant that France would retain control of Belgium, Savoy and the west bank of the Rhine, while withdrawing from Spain, Holland, Italy and Germany. Napoleon did not accept the terms, and the allies crossed the Rhine into French territory on 1 January 1814. Wellington's British forces had already crossed the Pyrenees into south-western France. In north-eastern France, Napoleon led about 70,000 troops against a coalition army of 200,000. After a defeat at the Battle of La Rothière, the French won a series of victories in February which induced the coalition to offer peace on the basis of France's 1791 frontiers. Napoleon, however, decided to fight on.

Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled twice in his lifetime, first to the Mediterranean island of Elba in 1814 and finally to the remote South Atlantic island of Saint Helena in 1815.

First Exile: Elba (1814–1815) Following his initial abdication in April 1814 after the War of the Sixth Coalition, Napoleon was banished to Elba, a small island off the coast of Tuscany. The Treaty of Fontainebleau allowed him to retain the title of Emperor and govern the island, but he escaped in March 1815 to return to France for the Hundred Days.

Second Exile: Saint Helena (1815–1821) After his final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815, the British government decided he was too dangerous to keep in Europe or execute, fearing he would become a martyr. He was transported to Saint Helena, an isolated volcanic island 1,900 km west of Africa, where he was held under strict surveillance at Longwood House.

The Battle of Waterloo was fought on Sunday 18 June 1815, near Waterloo (then in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, now in Belgium), being the last engagement with Napoleon I. The French Imperial Army under the command of Napoleon I was defeated by two armies of the Seventh Coalition. One was a British-led force with units from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Hanover, Brunswick, and Nassau, under the command of field marshal Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington. The other comprised three corps of the Prussian army under Field Marshal Blücher. The battle was known contemporaneously as the Battle of Mont Saint-Jean in France (after the hamlet of Mont-Saint-Jean) and La Belle Alliance in Prussia ("the Beautiful Alliance"; after the inn of La Belle Alliance).



The title Duke of Wellington refers to a peerage in the Peerage of the United Kingdom created in 1814 for Arthur Wellesley, the Anglo-Irish military commander best known for defeating Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (1769–1852) was a prominent statesman who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1828 to 1830 and again in 1834. During his political career, he notably oversaw the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 while resisting broader parliamentary reform. He is also the namesake of the Wellington boot and was nicknamed the "Iron Duke" for his steadfast military leadership.

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A painting by William Sadler. Made Public. The Battle of Watterloo, 1815.

Waterloo was the decisive engagement of the Waterloo campaign and Napoleon's last. It was the second-bloodiest single day battle of the Napoleonic Wars, after Borodino.

According to Wellington, the battle was "the nearest-run thing you ever saw in your life". Napoleon abdicated four days later, and coalition forces entered Paris on 7 July. The defeat at Waterloo marked the end of Napoleon's Hundred Days return from exile from Elba, and it precipitated Napoleon's second and definitive abdication as Emperor of the French and ended the First French Empire.



Conditions of Napoleon's Death:

Napoleon lived on Saint Helena for six years under the supervision of Governor Sir Hudson Lowe, who severely restricted his movement, intercepted his correspondence, and reduced his household staff. Suffering from poor health and harsh conditions, Napoleon died on May 5, 1821, likely from stomach cancer. His remains were returned to Paris in 1840 and interred at Les Invalides.

A painting by James Sant, 1820-1916. Made Public. Napoleon at St. Helena, Last Phase.

The term, "Light Horseman" refers to those men who travelled between units on horseback to relay messages and other communications to help coordinate the units in battles. Unlike the "heavy calvary" units which carried partisans and other armament, these men travelled only with sabers or carbines, relying on speed to evade the enemy.



My Bonny Light Horseman

Intro/Instrumental

Oh, She stood there all alone
overlooking the sea
And cryin' for her horseman
no more she would see
no more she would see.

Chorus

“Oh, Napoleon Bonaparte,
you're the cause of my woe.
Since my Bonny light horseman
to the wars he did go,
to the wars he did go.

Broken hearted I'll wander,
broken hearted I'll remain.
Since my Bonny Light Horseman
in the wars he was slain.
in the wars he was slain.”

When ‘Boney’* commanded,
all his armies to stand,
He did proudly lift banners,
so gayly, so grand.
so gayly, so grand.

He levelled his cannons,
right over the plain,
And my Bonny light horseman
in the wars he was slain.
in the wars he was slain.

Chorus/Instrumental

And if I was a small bird,
with my wings I could fly,
I would fly o'er the salt sea,
where my true love does lie.
where my true love does lie.

Three years and six months now,
he left this bright shore.
Oh, my Bonny light horseman,
I will ne'er see you more.
I will ne'er see you more.

Chorus

* “Boney” was a Scots insult towards
Napoleon as a small and skinny man.



Bonny Light Horseman

Arrangement by the KelticDead Music

Traditional



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRZzXC7hSNQ>

The sheet music arrangement shown above is the version played by the KDM Group Musicians and was written in C Major.

Shaun Young arranged the sheet music, and adjusted the lyrics of the song to play with it. He uses an Irish-Tuned, Low Octave Bouzouki to set the rhythm and beat, a Kerry Mezzo C whistle, a bodhran, as well as voice and chorus parts.



Shaun Young

Earnie Taft featured the fiddle in this melody, and

Alan Beck provided a guitar.

For this and other "KDM Story Broadside" visit <https://kelticdeadmusic.org/story-broadsides/>



Earnie Taft

For Bios of the KDM Volunteers visit <https://kelticdeadmusic.org/Friends/>



Alan Beck

KelticDead Music Initiative

is a private, on-line music-education initiative. All the music projects are recorded with live, acoustic instruments and performed in accordance with simplified sheet music arranged in eight bar formats (whenever possible) in accordance with the guidelines that are within the Celtic music traditions. For more music videos and stories visit ...

<https://KelticDeadMusic.org>