

# The Bog Standard

## Standard

### FarmPEAT Newsletter

Issue 3 | December 2022

The FarmPEAT (Farm Payments for Ecological and Agricultural Transitions) Project is developing a locally-led, innovative, results-based farm scheme for farmers who manage lands that surround some of Ireland's finest remaining raised bogs.



*Farming with nature in the midland raised bog landscape.*



**Supporting Actions** It has been a busy few months for the FarmPEAT team but as usual, our participating farmers have been even busier. At the end of the last scoring season, the project team worked with the farmers to come up with management suggestions that will improve the farm's score. Once everyone was in agreement a farm plan was drawn up. Approximately half of the FarmPEAT farmers have received their Annual Works Plan, and many have completed the work already. With the results-based payment date approaching we hope to see as many farmers as possible seeing an improvement in their payments for taking on these actions.

[More on page 4-5.](#)



### 'Love Your Wellies' Art's Competition 2023

FarmPEAT's Art's Competition is returning in 2023, opening early January and building on the success of the 1st year. The competition is bigger and better than before! Many lessons were taken from the 1st year of the competition and the format has been adapted to deliver more to the incredible numbers who have shown interest, not to mention bigger prizes and more school visits! More pg. 7



# Behind the Hedge

## Project Update: Annual Works Plan

This month we are focusing on Annual Works Plans and how to submit your Payment Claim Sheet. Many of you will already have received your FarmPEAT Annual Works Plan in the post. This is a plan that includes a list of actions that are to be carried out on the farm. These actions are agreed upon by the farmer and the project team, and if completed should result in an increase in your farm score. Below is an example of what an Annual Works Plan will look like.

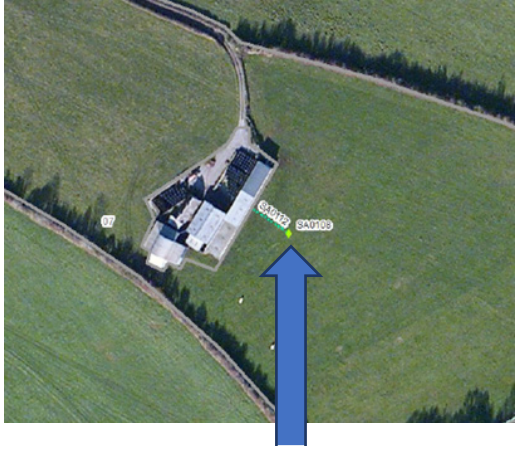
Page 1 will have the list of actions that are due to be completed. This will also show the estimated cost of the action, the percentage at which it is funded, and the funding due to you once the action is complete. Each action is assigned its own unique ID e.g., SA0104. This is how you can identify the action on your map (see below). Page 2 gives instructions on how to claim your payment. It will also note any extra guidelines if necessary. Example: clearance of woody vegetation will take place outside of bird-breeding season, training required before drain blocking etc. Page 3 includes a map of your farm with the actions included.

Supporting action (SA)	Year	Plot	SA ID	Area	Cost	Total Cost	% funding	SA Objective	Action completed & claimed	
L23 Water trough - concrete 75 gal	2022	02027	SA0108	1	€466.40	€466.40	50	€234	Watercourse protection	Photo Declaration <input type="checkbox"/>
L1 Foliat and wire fence	2022	02027	SA0110	50	€3.00	€150.00	50	€75	Watercourse protection	Photo Declaration <input type="checkbox"/>
L1 Foliat and wire fence	2022	02013	SA0111	50	€3.00	€150.00	50	€75	Watercourse protection	Photo Declaration <input type="checkbox"/>
L18 Hydrodare piping (24 normal, 150m roll)	2022	02027	SA0112	1	€154.00	€154.00	50	€77	Watercourse protection	Photo Declaration <input type="checkbox"/>

**Total approved funding (maximum) for year: €491**

Once the actions are completed tick the box

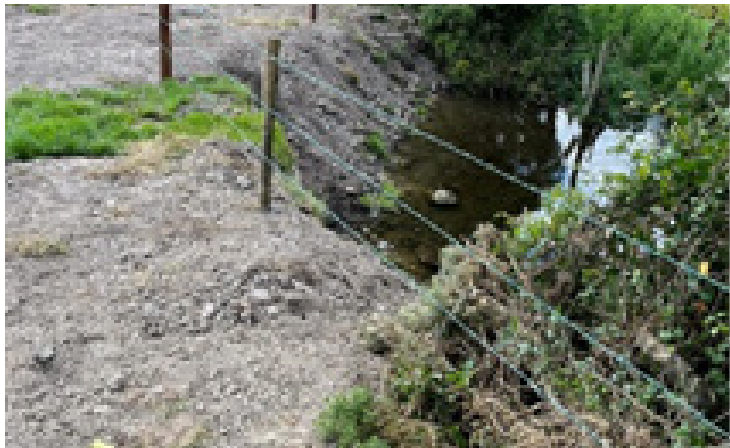
Sign your name and add date.



SA0112 and SA0108 match up with hydrodare piping and water trough on your list of actions on page 1.

### Claiming payment for your Annual Works Plan:

- Step 1.** Complete the actions listed on your plan.
- Step 2.** Fill in your form as shown above.
- Step 3.** Send form back to us.
- Step 4.** Take pictures of the work completed and send to us (via WhatsApp, or whatever is easiest for you). For specific actions a site visit may be necessary.



## Raheenmore Knowledge Transfer Day

To highlight the importance of Raheenmore bog, the FarmPEAT Project hosted an information day in November. This was open to all landowners surrounding the bog and also to anyone in the general community that had interest in learning a bit about the bog. We started off the day with a quick indoor session and we were lucky to be joined by experienced hydrologist Hugh Cushnan, and the bog expert Fernando Fernandez. Both Hugh and Fernando have an in-depth knowledge on Raheenmore bog and have been involved in its restoration for a number of years. The knowledge they were able to bring to the group was extremely valuable. We were also joined by Donal Daly (hydrogeologist & catchment scientist) and Jim Ryan (wetland ecologist) who are also excellent caretakers of the environment, especially bogs!



## Peatlands Roadtrip

This year the Irish Peatland Society hosted a fantastic roadtrip lasting 3 days. The roadtrip covered sites in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon and our very own site, Clonboley Bog, was included. Throughout the three days we heard about rewetting actions from Bord na Mona, Wild Atlantic Nature, Coillte and many others. It was a great opportunity to see the work being done in peatlands by other projects. Many thanks to one of our FarmPEAT participant famers, Seamus, who welcomed the roadtrip onto his farm and allowed us to demonstrate how we score wet grasslands on agricultural land.



***Did you know?***  
***with Farmer Pete***

***The Tollund Man Was So Well Preserved, He Even Has Stubble And Eyelashes.***



# Supporting Actions

## Watercourse Protection

This year, watercourse protection has been the main theme of the supporting actions. Damage to watercourses will have a direct impact on your 'Whole Farm Assessment' score. E.g. if there is heavy poaching along a watercourse or, animals drinking from a watercourse, your Whole Farm Assessment score goes from 1 to 0.6, meaning you will only receive 60% of your payment. However, if you take on supporting actions by installing a water trough and fencing the watercourse, your Whole Farm Assessment goes back up to 1. As this action is considered mutually beneficial to both farmer and the environment, the rate of funding is 50%.



Installed water trough



Before: Open access to watercourse



After: Bridge and fencing installed

## How Supporting Actions can have a direct impact on your results-based payments:

**Year 1:** Watercourse not fenced with animals using it as drinking source.  
Payment due: €1000  
Whole Farm Assessment score: 0.6  
Payment due: €1000 x 0.6 = €600

**Year 2:** Supporting actions taken to fence off watercourse and put in water trough  
Payment due: €1000  
Whole Farm Assessment Score: 1.0  
Payment due: €1000 x 1.0 = €1000

## Gorse Removal

Another action that has been taken on this year is gorse removal. Although gorse can be useful for providing shelter for animals, it can quickly take over an area and leaves little to no room for biodiversity. There are different methods for removing gorse and the best approach can vary depending on different factors. The simple approach is to remove it by mulching. However, on areas with a large amount of gorse, this will leave a lot of plant litter behind. Another method to consider is the 'push and pull' method. The gorse can be rolled back and forth by a digger to loosen



Gorse removal by mulching



Gorse removal by 'push and pull'

### Peat & Plastic Dams

It won't come as a surprise to anyone that peat and plastic dams are also included in the projects Supporting Actions. The purpose of the dams is to slow the flow of water in drains on your land. This will increase the water table level in your peat soils and hence, allow the peat soil to hold more water. As a result, these soils will release less carbon into the atmosphere. If a farmer decides to take on peat/plastic dams, then these are funded 100% by the project. When creating a plan for peat/plastic dams, we work closely with the farmer to ensure that the water in the drain is brought up to a level that they are comfortable with. To ensure that no other lands would be negatively impacted by these dams, a hydrologist may also visit the site to assess the drain. A training day will also be provided for farmers taking on these actions. This will be led by an experienced contractor who has worked with drains on the high bog.



*Installed Plastic Dam*

At the moment, we have eight farms that are prepared to install peat/plastic dams. Each farm has been assessed and we are currently working on suitable action plans. Care is always taken when developing these plans as each drain can bring different challenges. For example, if sourcing peat soil is not possible, then plastic dams will need to be sourced. Other situations involve drains that have a marl or sandy silt substrate. Unfortunately, peat dams would not be efficient here, so FarmPEAT are working hard to come up with alternative solutions. It is a challenging process, but it is something that we hope will have a positive impact on the environment along with a positive impact on results-based payments.



*Constructed Peat Dam*

## ‘Love Your Wellies’ Update

The ‘Love Your Wellies’ Initiative is growing all the time and we have far exceeded all expectations. This is primarily down to the great passion and engagement shown by schools and communities throughout the peat landscape, up and down the country. These are just some of the highlights from the past few months.

## UCD School of Landscape Architecture studio engagement

In September, FarmPEAT hosted a visit from UCD’s School of Landscape Architecture to Clara Town. We got the chance to show them Clara bog and highlight the importance of protecting such a valuable landscape, followed by a visit to Colman Condron’s farm, a FarmPEAT participant farmer. Here we were joined by FarmPEAT’s ecologist, Emma, and Irish Rural Link’s Evelyn. The students were given an in-depth insight into the work we are doing as well as getting to see some of the challenges faced and even spoke with the farmer.



The second part of the day we met with Clara’s Heritage Society, Local Chamber of Commerce and Tidy Towns, where they put on a spectacular presentation and put on show everything magical Clara has to offer. To end the visit, local historian Brian Sheridan, led the students through Clara showing them hidden gems, forgotten heritage and challenges rural towns face. We wish to say a special thank you to all the students, community members, professionals and landowners who made this day possible.



## ‘Love Your Wellies’ Art’s Competition 2022 WINNER!

Kilteevan National School in Co. Longford hosted the entire FarmPEAT team last month. We joined them in celebrating the achievements of Mark Fox becoming the first winner of the LYW art’s Competition. Members from the local community, newspapers and photographers all joined in on the day’s events. The sun welcomed an outdoor occasion and the parish perched on the banks of Lough Ree gleamed in the autumn day. All attention centred on Mark’s winning entry which beautifully told the story of his local area, the importance of the peat landscape and what it meant to him.



It was a privilege to be so warmly welcomed into the community as they share the recognition earned by Mark, his teacher and all the students. Thank you Kilteevan and to all those who entered the 2022 art’s competition.





# FarmPEAT



## “Love your Wellies” Art’s Competition

**Launching  
January 2023!**

### 1. Choose YOUR Theme

**History**  
Change through time  
Local History  
Heritage

**Environment**  
Landscape  
Climate change  
Ecology

**Community**  
Town  
School  
Village

**Farming**  
Animal care  
Importance of farming  
Biodiversity  
Farm life

### 2. Choose YOUR Style

**Digital**  
Audio recording  
Blog/ vlog  
Video

**Artistic**  
Drawing  
Poster  
Painting

**Literary**  
Story  
Poem  
Essay

**Model**  
Open world installation  
3D representation  
Constructed

### 3. Tell YOUR Story!

Enter as an individual or a group (max 4)

**Entry Groups:**

- 1. Junior -2nd (Primary)
- 2. 3rd - 6th (Primary)
- 3. 1st - 3rd (Secondary)
- 4. 4th - 6th (Secondary)

Prizes and more.

Closing date 7th April 2023.

For further details, speak to your teacher.

If you have questions/queries, please feel free to contact us at [loveyourwellies@farmpeat.ie](mailto:loveyourwellies@farmpeat.ie)



### Prizes

- 1st Place - €1000 + €1000 to winning entries school.
  - 2nd Place - €600 + €600 to winning entry’s school.
  - 3rd Place - €400 + €400 to winning entry’s school
- All Prizes include plaques, medals and school promotions

### Workshops

Participating schools can avail of presentations, fieldtrips and workshops which are tailor-made to fit the needs of each school.

## Farmer Training Day 2022

Another year of FarmPEAT, another year of training days. A big thank you to our participant farmers for attending our 2022 Farmer Training Days. For some, it was their first training day while others were back for round two! Due to last year's success, we kept the same layout for the day with an indoor session and an outdoor session. The indoor session allowed us to talk about the aims of the project and why we are focusing on peat soils around raised bogs. It also gives us a chance to hear the valuable feedback that participating farmers have. Although the training day is put in place to highlight the importance of "peat-friendly" farming, it's also important for the project team to meet the farmers in a group setting. It gives us a great chance get involved with the discussion that is going on with the local farming community.

Many thanks to our host farmers Wayne Burrell, John Lawlor, John Colgan and Seamus Fallon.



## National EIP-AGRI Conference

On the 28th of November, the National Rural Network (NRN) held a national EIP-AGRI conference in Athlone, on behalf of The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The event was attended by farmers, researchers, farm advisors and policymakers. It was a rare opportunity to gather everyone in one room but still have many voices heard. FarmPEAT were thrilled with the opportunity to speak at the conference and highlight what we see as some of our successful innovations and outputs of the project to date.

Opened by Minister Pippa Hackett, the attendees were then given the chance to learn about numerous European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) and the work being done in these projects. FarmPEAT were delighted with Minister Hackett's special mention of FarmPEAT's Love Your Wellies Arts Competition as an example of how EIPs engage successfully with communities



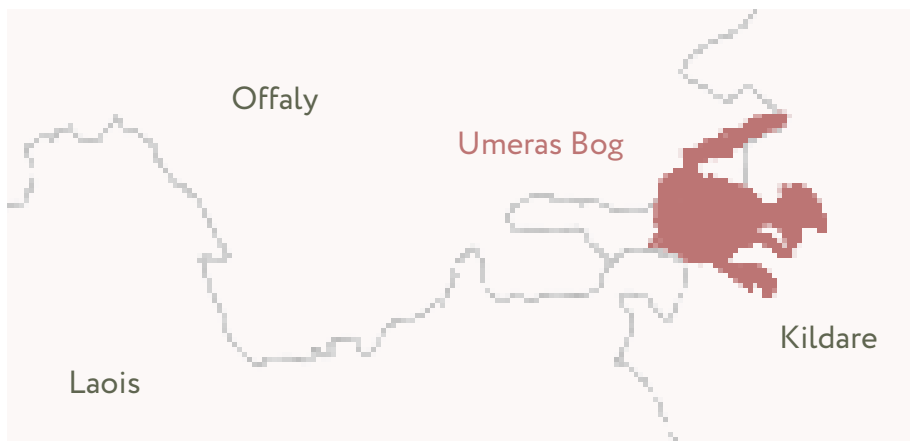
Most impressive were the farmers who spoke and highlighted the importance of the relationship between the farmers and the EIP project team as a key element in the success of the projects. The frequent contact and farm visits from the project teams meant that the farmers understood the project aims and trusted the EIP staff.

FarmPEAT would like to thank the NRN for inviting us to speak at the event and we would also like to say a big well done to everyone who participated during the day. Knowledge shared is knowledge gained.





# Umeras Bog Profile



## Location: Kildare/Offaly

Umeras Bog is located on the Offaly/Kildare border between Rathangan and Monasterevin close to the new Barrow Blueway. Umeras Bog is a Bord na Móna former raised bog that has been industrially harvested and is now out of production. Remnant peat depths are generally over 2.5m; Umeras is considered a deep peat cutover bog.

Umeras Community Development is a local community group that is a partner on the FarmPEAT Project. They are actively promoting the protection of this site for its natural heritage and local amenity values. Bord na Móna began work to rewet this bog in 2021 as part of BnM's Peatlands Climate Action Scheme (PCAS). A significant part of the site has deeper residual peat that is suited to the development of Sphagnum-rich peatland habitats.

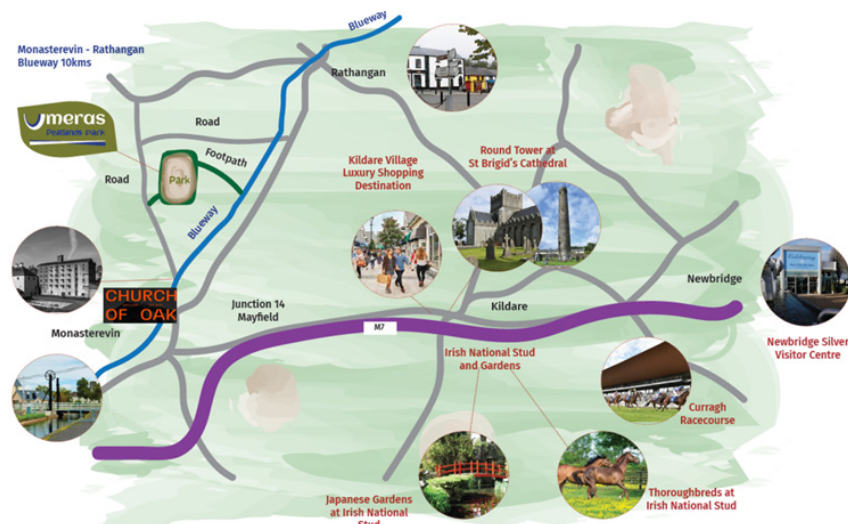


Members of the FarmPEAT Project Team, Umeras Community Development Group and Bord na Mona at Umeras Bog.

The Umeras site includes a variety of cutover habitats and agricultural land on peat soils. There are currently six FarmPEAT project farmers in the Umeras area. It could be considered one of the more intensive areas for farming out of our eight project sites, and rewetting actions can be challenging due to the production value of land in this area.

Nonetheless, it is a community that is very engaged with the work being done on their peat landscape. As with peatlands and bogs throughout the state, peat production has now ceased on Umeras Bog. Inspired by the work undertaken by other communities throughout the country and the success of other peatland attractions such as Lough Boora Discovery Park, the objective is to transform Umeras Bog into a peatlands park.

Umeras Community Development raised over €100,000 from the local communities, Kildare Leader, the Just Transition Fund and local councillors to conduct feasibility, design and biodiversity studies into Umeras



Peatlands Park (<https://www.facebook.com/umeraspeatlands>). The project has received support from Kildare and Offaly County Councils, Kildare Failte, Coillte, Waterways Ireland and Church of Oak – a new distillery being developed on the Grand Canal. The independent feasibility study has found that there is significant evidence, conditions and opportunity to create a successful & sustainable project at Umeras Peatlands Park.

Umeras Bog local Environs

# A Trip Through my Farming Life

FarmPEAT Farmer Liaison Officer Bernie Duffy gives us a trip down memory lane with this heartfelt piece on his life in farming. Wherever you're reading this from, get ready to be able to smell the fresh mown hay!

I am the third generation in my family to farm in the townland of Toughereen which lies between Monasterevin and Rathangan in Co Kildare. My grandfather who was from a farming family that lived outside Tuam County Galway, emigrated to New York in 1922. Two years later he met and married a Kildare girl. They had two boys before returning to Ireland and in 1933 they bought a farm not far from my grandmother's home place, her family were also farmers. They had five more sons and my father, the eldest, stayed and worked the land while his brothers went on to other careers, two of them also becoming farmers.

My father and mother married in 1954, she was the daughter of the local blacksmith and farmer. They had two sons, me being the youngest, and they worked together until their retirement in 1992 when I took on the mantle. When I was growing up it was very much a traditional mixed farming enterprise. Cattle, sows and sheep would be seen in the fields and a goat or two for good measure. The horses were replaced by a Massey Ferguson 35 before I was born but the stables are still there and often horseshoes are turned up when a field is ploughed.



Community Games Art competition 1977 winner Bernie Duffy with his medal and local Lackagh N.S winners in the LYW art's Competition 2022



Re-colonisation on Umeras Bog

We started supplying milk to the local co op in the 1960s. All the cows were milked by hand by my mother, father and youngest uncle until he left home in 1971. My father then installed a bucket plant that made life a lot easier and over two decades later I was still using the same equipment until I stopped supplying milk in 1995.

The annual pilgrimage to the bog to harvest turf wasn't one I used to look forward to when I was young. The days were long and the work was slow, barrowing the slane cut turf out the hollow to spread it to dry. Making tea and boiling eggs on an open fire were the highlight of the day, food never tasted as good as it did out in the fresh bog air. I still have some turf cut by machine but my appreciation for the bog has grown the older I get and the more I have become aware of the special environment that it is.

Some of the fondest memories from my youth are of tramping hay and ricking it in the farmyard. There was a lovely meitheal to this work and a great camaraderie between neighbouring farmers to help save each other's crop. I was a bit young at that time, but I remember the banter and I can still see the men with their shirt sleeves rolled up, forking hay from one to another to build the rick and top it off. To this day the smell of fresh mown hay transports me back to that time and a happy childhood and maybe that's why I've always stuck with haymaking. I still bale with the trusty New Holland 370 that my father bought in 1981 and the neighbours still come to stack the small square bales each summer.



*Post-industrial landscape*

Saving hay to sell and fattening store lambs is the mainstay of my farming activity today. Through my work in Umeras Community Development I became involved with The FarmPEAT Project on a part time basis. Initially my role was local to the project farmers around Umeras bog but that has grown, and our project manager Caroline has included me in all aspects of the programme, from soil sampling and drain surveying to developing and implementing project goals. I give a farmer's perspective on how the changes and challenges that we now face into will impact on farming practices and livelihoods and how best the project can support farmers as we prepare for the future.



*Bernie (left) with neighbours Eddie and Joe.*



*Baling on Bernie's farm.*

# Spot the Difference! WIN €50\*

Farmer Pete pays a visit to his local drain where he recently slowed the flow, but not everything is quiet right.... Help Farmer Pete spot all the differences before the magic of Christmas is gone and you will be handsomely rewarded!

**How to enter:** Find all 18 differences and clearly circle/ highlight them.  
Take a screenshot or a picture on your phone showing all 18.  
Send your entry to [loveyourwellies@farmpeat.ie](mailto:loveyourwellies@farmpeat.ie)

**Closing date:** Friday 13th January (good luck!).  
A winner will be selected at random from all entries who find the 18 differences and receive a \*€50 one4all voucher.



@farmpeatproject



@farmpeat  
Farm PEAT Project



/FarmPEATproject



FarmPEAT Project | c/o Irish Rural Link | Moate Business Park  
Clara Rd. | Moate | County Westmeath | Ireland | N37 W9R0

The FarmPEAT project is an EIP (European Innovation Partnership) project being administered by Nature Based Agri Solutions Ltd. The Project is funded by the EU Recovery Instrument Funding under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2022.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development: Europe  
investing in rural areas

## A Christmas Childhood

By Patrick Kavanagh

One side of the potato-pits was white with frost -  
How wonderful that was, how wonderful!  
And when we put our ears to the paling-post  
The music that came out was magical.

The light between the ricks of hay and straw  
Was a hole in Heaven's gable. An apple tree  
With its December-glinting fruit we saw -  
O you, Eve, were the world that tempted me.

To eat the knowledge that grew in clay  
And death the germ within it! Now and then  
I can remember something of the gay  
Garden that was childhood's. Again.

The tracks of cattle to a drinking-place,  
A green stone lying sideways in a ditch,  
Or any common sight, the transfigured face  
Of a beauty that the world did not touch.

My father played the melodion  
Outside at our gate;  
There were stars in the morning east  
And they danced to his music.

Across the wild bogs his melodion called  
To Lennons and Callans.  
As I pulled on my trousers in a hurry  
I knew some strange thing had happened.

Outside in the cow-house my mother  
Made the music of milking;  
The light of her stable-lamp was a star  
And the frost of Bethlehem made it twinkle.

A water-hen screeched in the bog,  
Mass-going feet  
Crunched the wafer-ice on the pot-holes,  
Somebody wistfully twisted the bellows wheel.

My child poet picked out the letters  
On the grey stone,  
In silver the wonder of a Christmas townland,  
The winking glitter of a frosty dawn.

Cassiopeia was over  
Cassidy's hanging hill,  
I looked and three whin bushes rode across  
The horizon - the Three Wise Kings.

And old man passing said:  
'Can't he make it talk -  
The melodion.' I hid in the doorway  
And tightened the belt of my box-pleated coat.

I nicked six nicks on the door-post  
With my penknife's big blade -  
there was a little one for cutting tobacco.  
And I was six Christmases of age.

My father played the melodion,  
My mother milked the cows,  
And I had a prayer like a white rose pinned  
On the Virgin Mary's blouse.

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