

## Whiskey in the Jar

Written by bluesever  
Monday, 04 August 2014 11:38 -

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### Whiskey in the Jar

**"Whiskey in the Jar"** is probably the only **Metallica** song you can hear sung around campfires at living history events. The famous Irish song has an untraceable origin, that is, the primary song writer and year of its release is unknown. Nevertheless, it has become quite popular over years due to extensive cover versions made by some reputable bands like Metallica. The version is based on the cover of Thin Lizzy.

### Whiskey in The Jar

'Whiskey in the jar' is the tale of a highwayman who, after robbing a military or government official ("for I am a bold deceiver"), is betrayed by a woman named Jenny or Ginny; whether she is his wife or sweetheart has never been clear. Various versions of the song take place in Kerry, Kilmagenny, Cork, Gilgarra Mountain, Sligo Town, and other towns throughout Ireland. It's also sometimes placed in the American South, in various places among the Ozarks or Appalachians, and this is because the Irish were amongst some of the earliest settlers in America.



### Highwayman

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A Highwayman meets with his victim (Captain Farrell, Colonel Farrell, Captain Everet, Colonel Pepper, or Sir Frederick Pottinger). First he drew his pistols and then he drew his rapier ("*a good trick to manage two pistols and a rapier*"

); while saying the obligatory line

*"Stand and deliver for I am a bold deceiver."*



## Highwayman

The protagonist then robs the victim and takes the money back to his deceitful girlfriend. While the highwayman is asleep, Jenny or Ginny hides his rapier, fills his pistols with water and calls in Captain Farrell (or whatever his name is in that version). After being arrested, the highwayman manages to beat the jailer with his fists and escape, in most cases to go look for his brother "*the one that's in the army*" and who is stationed somewhere "*in Cork or in Killarney*", except in the versions in which the robber has two brothers, one in Cork and the other in Killarney.



## Kerry Mountains

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Each verse is followed by a rousing chorus

*Mush a ringum durum da  
There's Whiskey in the Jar.*

*Whack for my daddy-o*

*Whack for my daddy-o*



## Whiskey in The Jar

**"Musha ring um a do um a da"** is very very similar sounding to these Irish words:

*Musha => M'uishe (my whiskey) ring um a => rinne me/ (rinne = past tense of "de/an" which is "do, make, perform, carry out, commit, turn out, reach, establish"; me/ = "I, me") do => don (from "do" + "an" = "to the, for the") um a da => amada/n (fool)*

which translates to **"I made my whiskey for the fool."**



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## Whiskey in The Jar

The song first gained wide exposure when the Irish folk band **The Dubliners** performed it internationally as a signature song, and recorded it on three albums in the 1960s. The

### Thin Lizzy

version differs from the traditional one by dropping two verses and changing the lyrics of the second and third verse into a different interpretation of the story while sticking to the main idea slightly. They also change the name of the female lover from Jenny to Molly.



## Dubliners - Whiskey in The Jar

In the last 50 years, "Whiskey in the Jar" has been recorded by the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, The Grateful Dead, Peter Paul and Mary, The Seekers, The Highwaymen, Roger Whittaker, The Irish Rovers, The Poxty Boggards, Seven Nations, The Limelitters, King Creosote, Brobdingnagian Bards, The Limelitters and Metallica, to name but a few. It has been called the most overdone folk song in Ireland.



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### Thin Lizzy - Whiskey in The Jar

The song's exact origins are unknown. A number of its lines and the general plot resemble those of a contemporary broadside ballad "Patrick Fleming" (also called "Patrick Flemmen he was a Valiant Soldier") about an Irish highwayman executed in 1650.



### Metallica - Whiskey in The Jar

Alan Lomax's "Folk Songs of North America", 1975 ed., originally published in 1960, has a somewhat romantic speculation of a connection between "Whiskey in the Jar" and John Gay's Beggar's Opera (1728), while citing no sources for the song earlier than 1930, one from the US and one from Scotland. As it turns out there are several English broadside ballad versions of "Whiskey in the Jar" in the Bodleian Library collections, Oxford. However, the Bodleian Library broadsides date back only as far as the mid 1840s, some 110 years after The Beggars' Opera opened.



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### Highwayman (Rozbójnik)

Any connection between the protagonist of "Whiskey in the Jar" and his Molly or sportin' Jenny with Captain MacHeath and Polly Peachem of The Beggar's Opera seems quite tenuous. There are several songs about highwaymen and betrayal in both the 18th and 19th centuries, including Gilderoy, MacPherson's Lament and Newlyn Town. In John Gay's London in the late 1720s, there were several active highwaymen as well as recently-captured or recently-hanged highwaymen available for inspiration. Some of the highwaymen still at large may have attended The Beggar's Opera in 1728.



### Whiskey in The Jar

#### Whiskey in the Jar Lyrics as sung by The Dubliners

*As I was a goin' over the far famed Kerry mountains I met with captain Farrell and his money he was counting I first produced my pistol and I then produced my rapier Saying "Stand and deliver" for he were a bold deceiver Chorus: Mush-a ring dum-a do dum-a da Whack for my daddy-o. Whack for my daddy-o There's whiskey in the jar I counted out his money and it made a pretty penny I put it in me pocket and I took it home to Jenny She sighed and she swore that she never would deceive me But the devil take the women for they never can be*

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*easy* Chorus: *I went up to my chamber, all for to take a slumber I dreamt of gold and jewels  
and for sure 't was no wonder But Jenny drew me charges and she filled them up with water  
Then sent for captain Farrell to be ready for the slaughter* Chorus: *'t was early in the  
morning, just before I rose to travel Up comes a band of footmen and likewise captain Farrell I  
first produced me pistol for she stole away me rapier I couldn't shoot the water, so a prisoner I  
was taken* Chorus: *Now there's some take delight in the carriages a rolling and others take  
delight in the hurling and the bowling but I take delight in the juice of the barley and courting  
pretty fair maids in the morning bright and early* Chorus: *If anyone can aid me 't is my  
brother in the army If I can find his station in Cork or in Killarney And if he'll go with me, we'll  
go rovin' through Killkenny And I'm sure he'll treat me better than my own a-sporting Jenny*  
Chorus:



## Dubliners - Whiskey in The Jar