

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



JOHN HENRY MacAULEY (died 1937)| Sculptor

John Henry MacAuley was born on a farm in Glenshesk, County Antrim. Owing to an accident when he was a child, when he took part in a dare with other boys to see how far they could jump off the Glen Bridge, he was permanently disabled. He was taught to carve wood by the woman for whom his mother worked as cook. He opened his own shop in Ann Street, Ballycastle, County Antrim, selling objects carved out of bog oak, and his window displays of farm animals, circus caravans, and even an Irish funeral, were renowned. He was a well-known fiddle player and wrote a number of songs, though the only one published was the famous 'The Ould Lammas Fair in Ballycastle O'

At more than three centuries old, the Lammas Fair at Ballycastle, Co. Antrim is perhaps Ireland's longest running fair. It is held annually on the last Monday and Tuesday in August.

There is a plaque to John Henry on the shop on the right as Mrs MacAuley did not want it on her property.

The Song

At the Ould Lammas Fair in Ballycastle long ago
I met a pretty colleen who set me heart a-glow
She was smiling at her daddy buying lambs from Paddy Roe
At the Ould Lammas Fair in Ballycastle-O
Sure I seen her home that night
When the moon was shining bright
From the ould Lammas Fair in Ballycastle-O

CHORUS

At the ould Lammas Fair boys were you ever there

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Were you ever at the Fair In Ballycastle-O?
Did you treat your Mary Ann to some Dulse and Yellow Man
At the ould Lammas Fair in Ballycastle-O

In Flander's fields afar while resting from the War
We drank Bon Sante to the Flemish lassies O
But the scene that haunts my memory is kissing Mary Ann
Her pouting lips all sticky from eating Yellow Man
As we passed the silver Margy and we strolled along the strand
From the ould Lammas Fair in Ballycastle-O
Chorus

There's a neat little cabin on the slopes of fair Knocklayde
It's lit by love and sunshine where the heather honey's made
With the bees ever humming and the children's joyous call
Resounds across the valley as the shadows fall
Sure I take my fiddle down and my Mary smiling there
Brings back a happy mem'ry of the Lammas Fair
Chorus

Patrick Devlin

Acknowledgement: Kate Newmann: Dictionary of Ulster Biography 1993