

## Day of the Paddy

Late 1950s, social revolution

building a dream, houses for all.

Earning a living pushing barrows,

digging trenches in that haphazard  
way of the Welsh navvy.

Proud of my young strength,  
my staying power.

Spring morning, twelve men  
swagger onto the site

the dipped shoulder, the gimp,  
announcing Kilkenny, Connemara,  
and Cork.

Contracted for mains trenches  
needed quickly.

Why use them? We could do it.

Bastards, taking our work.

Aloof, they ignore our mutterings,  
no need for words:

twelve men, one great arm,  
unfaltering rhythm.

Sweating backs, sinuous muscle  
tearing it out four feet deep,  
five hours without pause,  
almost at walking pace.

One o'clock break, great hunks of meat  
fried on shovels

over a spitting fire,  
a loaf per man torn apart.

We watching now, inadequate,  
as we open our small  
neat packs of sandwiches.