

THAT'S THE GEM OF IRELAND'S CROWN

This is another very traditional-sounding song that was actually written by a known composer. “**Star of the County Down**” was written by Cathal McGarvey, who was actually from County Donegal and lived from 1866 to 1927. The tune, however, is similar to several older pieces, including several hymns. A “boreen” is a term for a narrow, unpaved road in rural Ireland. My favorite version is the one recorded in 1988 by **Van Morrison** with **The Chieftains**, which you can hear at <https://youtu.be/6sMZ2bUv9Q4?si=KRLfEqVTMf9uWdA1>.

STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN

By Cathal McGarvey

Em **G** **D**
In Banbridge Town in the County Down
Em **Bm**
One morning last July,
Em **G** **D**
From a boreen green came a sweet colleen
Em
And she smiled as she passed me by.
G **D**
She looked so sweet from her two bare feet
Em **Bm**
To the sheen of her nut brown hair.
Em **G** **D**
Such a coaxing elf, sure I shook myself
Em
For to see I was really there.

Chorus:

G **D**
From Bantry Bay up to Derry Quay and
Em **Bm**
From Galway to Dublin Town,
Em **G** **D**
No maid I've seen like the brown colleen
Em
That I met in the County Down.

As she onward sped, sure I scratched my head,
And I looked with a feelin' rare,
And I says, says I, to a passer-by,
"Who's the maid with the nut brown hair?"
He smiled at me and he says, says he,
"That's the gem of Ireland's crown.
Young Rosie McCann from the banks of the Bann,
She's the star of the County Down."

Chorus

At the Harvest Fair she'll be surely there
And I'll dress in my Sunday clothes,
With my shoes shone bright and my hat cocked right
For a smile from my nut brown rose.
No pipe I'll smoke, no horse I'll yoke
Till my plough turns rust coloured brown.
Till a smiling bride by my own fireside
Sits the star of the County Down

Chorus