

The Mummers' Join

How To Be A Mummer Toolkit

Section 1

What is a Mummer?



01 What is a Mummer?

Imagine you could round up a group of your friends at Christmas. Get them all to meet in your kitchen and dress in silly clothes using rags, ribbons, pillowcases, net curtains, old clothes, whatever you could find, the sillier the better, once you’re so well disguised that not even your family would recognise you. From here you'd head out into your community knocking on your neighbours doors to announce your arrival. When they'd come to the door you’d greet them with a rhyme and then sing, dance or play a tune to bring them good luck for the following year. In return the people of the house would give you some money or treats to thank you for your effort. And then off you’d go to the next house. That’s what it is to be a mummer! And this is a tradition that has been passed down from one generation to the next for thousands of years in Ireland.





Can I be a Mummer?

01 Can I be a Mummer?

YES! Anyone can be a Mummer!

Any age

Any nationality

And you don’t play an instrument, sing or dance that’s fine too. There’s always a role for everyone in the mummers.

Mumming is for everyone. It’s an opportunity to let your individual personality shine.



What's the difference between a Mummer, a Wrenboy and a Strawboy?



01 What's the Difference?



The **Mummers** go from house to house across the 12 days of Christmas.

The **Wren Boys** go from house to house on St. Stephen's Day.

The **Strawboys** are out all year round for weddings.

They all have the same goal; to bring good luck to your family and your home.



How to be a Mummer

01 How to be a Mummer

Step 1 - Form a Mumming group with your friends and family.

Step 2 - Design and create your costumes

Step 3 - Rehearse some rhymes, songs, tunes and dances

Step 4 - Choose a route your mummer group will travel and the houses you'll call to

Step 5 - Choose a day or days you'll go mumming over the 12 days of Christmas

Step 6 - Go mumming!





Section 2

Making the Mummers Costume

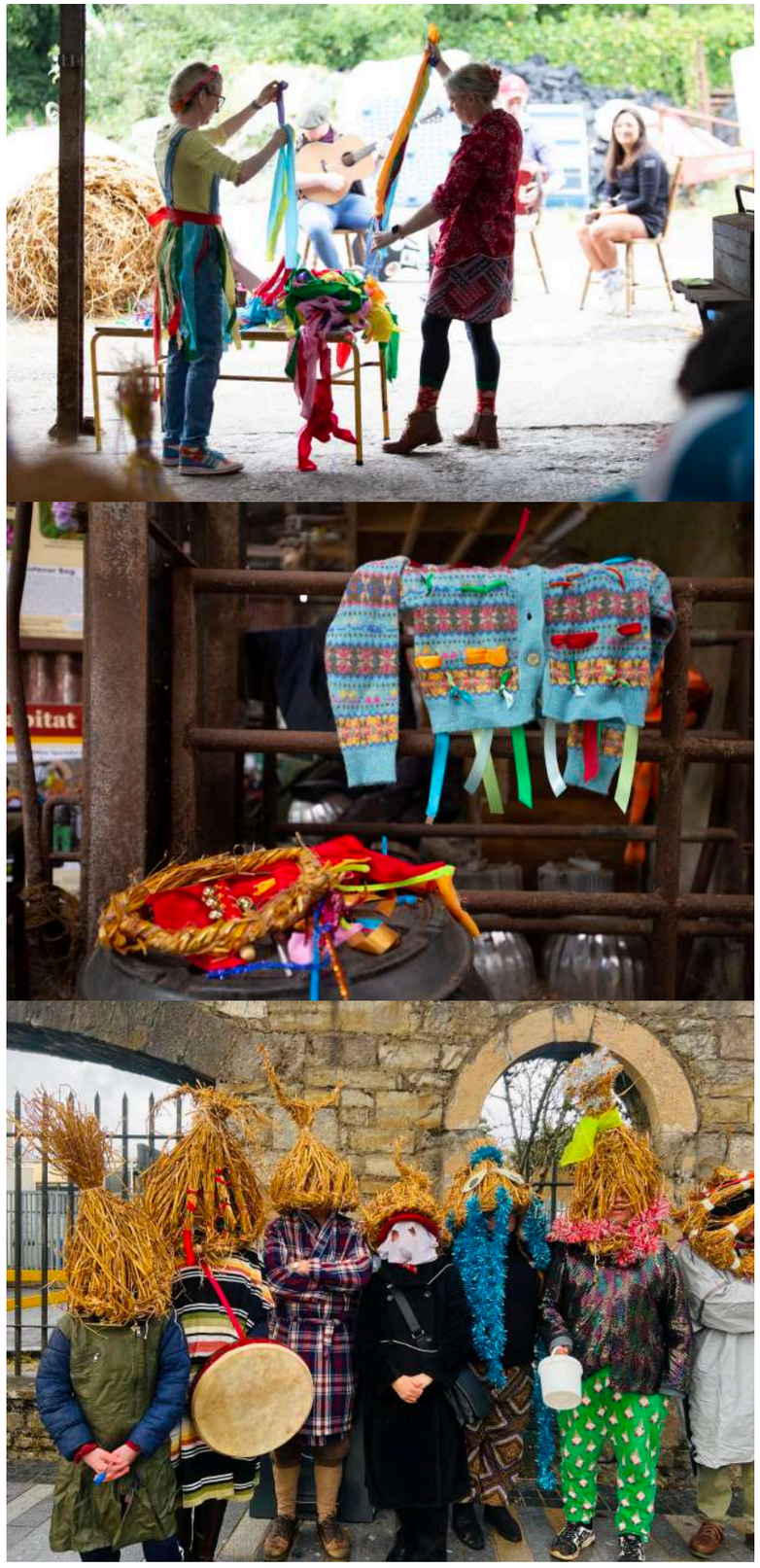
02 Gather the Material

Costumes don’t cost anything. You can make then with anything you can find around the house.

There’s no specific design. Just think <u>DISGUISE</u>!

Here’s some things you could use:

Your own old clothes, parents or grandparents old clothes, tea towels, pillow cases, old sheets, net curtains, tinsel, ribbons, odd shoes, scarves, paper bags, hats, rags, glasses and anything that jingles.



02 Here are some ideas to get you started…












02 Suggestions for school groups

Here’s some activities you could try in your classroom:

- Sketch ideas for designing your costume
- Create a powerpoint display of Mummer costume ideas and designs
- Bring in old clothes and rags to share in the classroom to create your costume
- Design and paint a paper bag / pillowcase face
- Make a creative container for collecting sweets and money.

02 Make a straw hat





The Mummers can also wear straw as part of their costume. This straw is cut from oats, wheat or barley. If there is some growing in your area why not ask the farmer can you have some to use in your Mummer costume.

You could stuff some straw into your shirt to make a big belly. Or you you could twist or plait some into a rope to wrap around your wrists, ankles and waist.

You could also try making the Mummers straw hat which is a little tricky to make but we've made an easy step by step video to help you along.

CLICK HERE TO WATCH IT

Section 3

Mummers' Rhymes, Music, Song & Dance.





Mummers’ Rhymes



03 Rhymes

It’s tradition for each Mummer to have their own rhyme to recite at the door.
These rhymes are short, funny and sometimes make no sense.
There are also traditional mumming characters such as Jack Straw, The Doctor and Captain Mummer.

Here’s some examples you could use:

As Captain Mummer knocks on the door…
Room Room my brave boys and girls,

Give us room to rhyme.

We’ll knock on the door

And dance like never before

At this Christmas time.

Here Comes I Jack Straw,

Such a man you never saw

Through a rock, through a reel through an old spinning wheel

Through a bag of water and an old mill hopper

And if you don’t believe a word I say

Enter in *The Doctor* he’ll clear the way.

(each character then introduces the next character)

03 Rhymes

Here Comes I the wee Doctor Brown, the best wee Doctor in the town.

I can cure the itch, the stitch, the palsy and the gout

If there's 99 diseases in, I can drive 100 out.

In my pocket I have crutches for lame ducks, spectacles for blind bumblebees,

And plasters for broken backed mice.

And if you don't believe a word I say, enter in Beelzebub, he'll clear the way.

But why don't you do as our ancestors did and create your own characters from local legends, pop stars, sports people, tv or book characters, or even you teacher.

Here Comes I, the Gruffalo
With my knobbly knees and turned out toes.
My eyes are orange, my tongue is black,
I've got purple prickles all over my back.
I'm the most terrible creature in this woods.
And if you don't believe a word I say,
Enter Mouse, he'll clear the way.

Here comes I, Fionn McCool,
A giant of old, standing tall and true.
A Fenian warrior, I'll defend our land,
Fearless and fierce, a hero so grand.
And if you don't believe a word I say,
Enter the Salmon of Knowledge,
She'll clear the way.



Mummers' Music

By Brian Mostyn

03 Mummers' Music

The Mummers usually played traditional music on the doorsteps of their community. However, that doesn't mean we have to stick to that tradition today. You're welcome to perform traditional music but also music, song and dance from any genre be it pop, rock, classical or country and western.

If you play an instrument here's some tunes you could learn.

The Stack Of Barley

***Hornpipe** in Key of Gmaj*

gf | efed BedB | AGEG AcBA | GFGA BABd | e2A2 A2gf |
| efed BedB | AGEG AcBA | GFGA BdAc |**1** B2G2 G2 :|
[**2** B2G2 G3 ||

A | BGBd g2fg | agfg edBd | g2fg edBd | e2A2 A2fg |
| agfa g2fe | dBAG AcBA | GFGA BdAc |**1** B2G2 G3 :|
[**2** B2G2 G2 ||

CLICK HERE FOR AUDIO

03 Mummers' Music

The Rattlin' Bog

Polka *in Key of Gmaj*

| B2 BA | GE EF/E/ | DG GA | BA A2 |
| B2 BA | GE EF/E/ | Dd dB | AG GA :||

| BG AG/A/ | BG AG/A/ | Bd dB | AG A2 |
| BG AG/A/ | BG AG/A/ | Bd dB | AG G2 :||

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I'll Tell Me Ma

Polka *in Gmaj*

E/ |:DG B>B | cB B>c | BA A>B |1 AG G>E :|
[2 AG G2 ||

| dd dB | cc cA | BB BG | AF ED |
| dd dB | cc cd/c/ | BG AF | GG G2 ||



CLICK HERE FOR AUDIO

03 Mummers' Music

The Centenary March

***March** in the Key of Dmaj*

DF | A2A>B AFED | f2f>d edBd | A2A>B AFED | E2E>F E2DF |
| A2A>B AFED | f2f>d edBd | A2d>e fedc | d2d>c d2 :||

Ad | f2f>a Adfa | g2f2 e2f>g | afdA FAGF | E2E>F E2F>G |
| ADFA dFAd | fagf edcB | Aa^ga =gecA | d2d>c d2 :||

CLICK HERE FOR AUDIO

The Geese In The Bog

***Jig** in Key of C*

B | cEE GEE | cEE GAB | cEE GED | EAA A2B |
| cEE GEE | cEE GAB | cBA GED | EAA A2 :|

B | cde ged | eaa ged | cde ged | eaa a2B |
| cde ged | eaa ged | cBA GED | EAA A2 :||

CLICK HERE FOR AUDIO



Mummers' Songs

By Fionnuala Maxwell

03 Mummers' Songs

Here We Come a Mumming

Here we come a mumming-o
a mumming o, a mumming o
Here we come a mumming o
Will you let us in?

We'll play a tune and sing a song
sing a song, sing a song
We'll play a tune and sing a song
Will you let us in?

Here we come...

We'll dance a step and rattle the can
Rattle the can, rattle the can
We'll dance a step and rattle the can
Will you let us in?

Here we come...

HERE FOR AUDIO



03 Mummers' Songs

I'll Tell me Ma

I'll tell me Ma when I go home,
The boys won't leave the girls alone.
They pulled my hair, they stole my comb,
Well that's alright till I go home.

She is handsome. She is pretty.
She is the bell of Belfast City.
She is a courtin' one, two, three.
Please won't you tell me, who is she?

Albert Mooney says he loves her.
All the boys are fighting for her.
They knock at the door and they ring at the bell
Sayin' "Oh my true love, are you well"?
Out she comes as white as snow,
Rings on her fingers, bells on her toes.
Ole Johnny Murray says she'll die
If she doesn't get the fella with the roving eye.

Let the wind and the rain and hail blow high
And the snow come tumbling from the sky,
She's as nice as apple pie.
She'll get her own lad by and by.
When she gets a lad of her own,
She won't tell her Ma when she gets home.
Let them all come as they will
For it's Albert Mooney she loves still.

I'll tell me Ma when I go home,
The boys won't leave the girls alone.
They pulled my hair, they stole my comb,
Well that's alright till I go home.

She is handsome. She is pretty.
She is the bell of Belfast City.
She is a courtin' one, two, three.
Please won't you tell me, who is she?

CLICK HERE FOR AUDIO

03 Mummers' Songs

Did You Ever Go A-Mumming? (Stack of Barley)

Did you ever go a mumming when the New Year it was coming with your granny's old pyjamas, and it turned inside out?
With the men all dressed like women, in their dresses they'd be spinning as they danced "The Stack of Barley" and they jumped and leapt about.

CHORUS:
Hi the dithery eye doh, del dydle dithery eye del dum, the hi dithery eye del dum, the dydle dithery um.... *(Or any other lilting sounds)*
Just get your tin and shake it, as a mummer you will make it, and you're sure to be well "trated" as you go from house to house.

You can wear your pillowcases, or your fancy curtain laces or a mask from Oíche Shamhna or some frilly underwear.
Straw hats with ribbons flapping, boots or wellingtons for tapping, a meal bag tied with bailing twine or flowers in your hair.

CHORUS

Perhaps you play the fiddle or can tell a yarn or riddle, or you dance a step or sing a song to bring a bit of cheer.
Or you might chance being an actor, playing St. Patrick or a doctor or the captain who will lead the way and bring luck for the year.

CHORUS

CLICK HERE FOR AUDIO



03 Mummers' Songs

When the Mummers Come Calling

Who is this outside our door?
The mummers have come round once more
What a lively night we have in store
When the mummers, they come calling.

CHORUS
We'll open the door and we'll let them in
The mummers have come round again
They'll bring us music and good cheer
And wish us well for the coming year.

Captain Mummer is the first to call.
He'll put some manners upon us all.
Room, boys, room, then we'll have a ball
When the mummers, they come calling.
CHORUS
Then there's Devil Doubt with his greasy pan.
Have you ever met such a funny man?
He'll beg for money and he'll rattle the can
When the mummers, they come calling.

CHORUS
St. Patrick and St. George appear.
And Cromwell who we all will fear.
And the Turkish Knight will feel the spear
When the mummers, they come calling.
CHORUS
The doctor comes when he hears a shout.
He'll cure the palsy and the gout.
The plague within and the plague without
When the mummers, they come calling.
CHORUS
And we can't forget the brave Jack Straw.
Such a man, you never saw.
Through a rock, through a reel, he will hum and haw
When the mummers, they come calling.
CHORUS
And when it comes to saying goodbye.
All silver, no brass, will be their cry.
We'll give them a trate and they won't be shy
When the mummers, they come calling.
CHORUS

CLICK HERE FOR AUDIO

Mummers' Dance

By Edwina Guckian



03 Mummers' Dance

Click on the titles below to view the video tutorial



The Stack of Barley



Árainn Mhór Half Decker



Clap Dance



Now off you go Mumming!

Start by Captain Mummer knocking on the door and saying their rhyme.

Then play a tune or sing a song as the people of the house come out to greet you.

After this, it’s time for each of you to share your rhymes.

When you’ve done this you could perform another song or a dance.

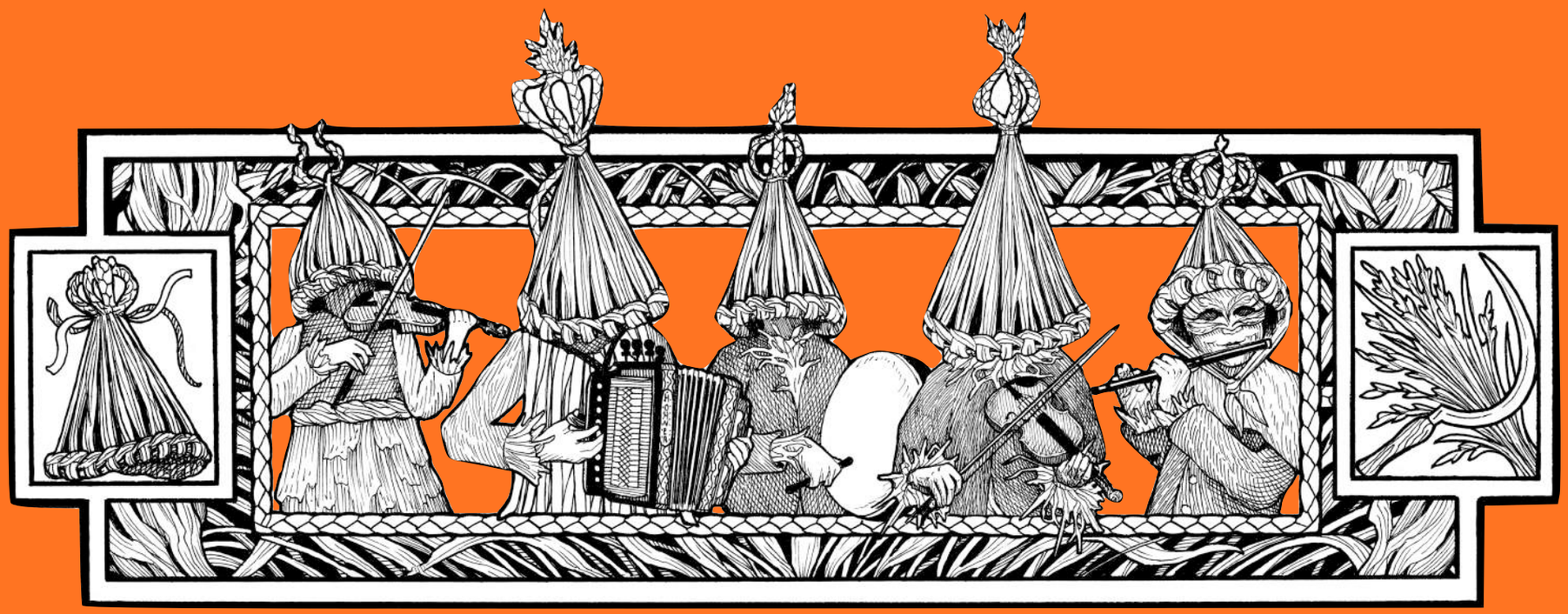
It’s then time for the people of the house to offer you some sweets or money before you head off to the next house.

But feel free to stay for a chat or share one more song if the people of the house invite you to.

Be sure to wish the people good luck as you leave:

“The Mummers are off, now give us a cheer,
We wish you a happy Christmas and a happy new year.”





The Mummers' Join

By Fionnuala Maxwell, Brian Mostyn & Edwina Guckian

www.SowingTheSeedProject.com

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