Eddie Burke Sets

…a collection of sets of tunes played by Connecticut's own legendary fiddler Eddie Burke.

Forward

The tunes sets contained here represent a small sampling of tunes played and loved by Edmond "Eddie" Burke, fiddler from Galway and Connecticut, who died April 1, 2005. They are mostly drawn from the ceili band music he played and so loved. Some are from his own days growing up in Galway and playing with groups such as the Salthill Ceili Band, the Corrib Ceili Band, the Aughrim Slopes Ceili Band, and the Ballinakill Ceili Band. Many of the tune sets are from ceili band recordings he listened to and memorized. With the invaluable contribution of Tom Walsh, who played accordion with Eddie for many years, they have been collected and notated more or less as Eddie played them.

Eddie had a very long history with traditional music. He was born into a family of musicians, and early on learned the accordion and fiddle. He progressed into work with ceili bands as a young man, and played with some of the best musicians of his time. In the 1950's, like many of his generation, he came to the United States and took a day job as a machine tender to support his family, which included his wife, Mary, of County Clare, and their three daughters. Music remained central to his life, and evenings and weekends were filled with traveling and playing for dances, parties, and sessions. He played regularly with Chris Tabb, and his son John Tabb. Fellow Irish musicians, including family friend Seamus Connolly, sought him out to play a few tunes when they were in the area. Later in his life, in 1998, the Irish cultural group, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann (CCE), Northeast U.S. Region, honored him with induction into its Hall of Fame, and in the summer of 2003 TREOIR magazine published an article about his life and contributions to Irish traditional music.

Eddie & John Tabb share a special moment.

Yet despite these experiences, he was always humble, and wonderfully kind and encouraging to newer players. If he knew someone was working on a particular tune, he'd always make a point to play that one at a session to give the person a chance to work on it. For years, he and Tom Walsh hosted Sunday afternoon sessions at the AOH in New Britain and the Irish Club in Glastonbury (and thankfully, Tom continues to do so). Players of all levels were welcomed and many people came to the music this way. When I first was learning traditional music and told Eddie I was coming from a classical

background, his words to me were "a lot of good fiddlers started that way. That's how Sean Maguire started". He encouraged everyone and was always willing to let us record him playing a tune so we could learn it.

Eddie had a wonderful sense of humor, and usually had a twinkle in his eye. He often made people laugh. Tom Walsh tells a story of Eddie commenting on someone who, in Tom's words, was a "self-appointed expert" on traditional music. Eddie's observation was that the person knew "as much about Irish music as a dog knows about who his father is." Tom and Eddie played frequent gigs together; Tom recalls that at the end of the evening, as they would pull into Eddie's driveway, Eddie always quipped "another successful landing!" I once asked him if he remembered the Irish language he spoke at school as a boy. He looked at me with a bit of the devil in his eye and said, "I could give you a few words." (I had the clear impression they were not words allowed at school.)

Eddie had a great memory for the music and was almost never at a loss to get a tune going or move from one tune to the next. After he retired, he and Tom began playing regularly for a few hours every week at Eddie's house. Tom remembers one afternoon when for several hours, they played nothing but hornpipes, one after the next. Eddie didn't always recall the name of a tune, but he could always tell you which ceili band played it, and what tunes went well with it. He and Tom shared a special appreciation for the music of Liverpool Ceili Band, and Eddie's own music always retained the swing and energy of his ceili band background.

Concertina player John Kalinowski tells a wonderful story of the first time he met Eddie and Tom. Some years ago, John and a few other aspiring traditional players, still new to the music, were playing a few tunes off in a corner at the AOH in New Britain one Sunday afternoon. It was a beginner's session led by the late Steve Mansfield. All of a sudden two men walked in – one with a fiddle and the other with an accordion - and asked if they could sit in. It was Eddie and Tom, who then pulled up two chairs smack-dab into the middle of the room, sat down, and began to play. John says the sound of their "real" Irish music almost knocked him over. The first tune they played was "Over the Moor to Maggie" and has been one of his favorites since.

My own favorite story is the time a few years back, when I was newer to the music, and stopped by the Maple Café in Hartford one St. Patrick's Day night to hear Tom and Eddie play. I had told Eddie I might stop by. I didn't bring my fiddle; it seemed presumptuous to bring an instrument to their gig. I walked in and saw Eddie and Tom playing with an empty chair next to them, and thought "Uh-oh." I went over and Eddie said, "We've been waiting for you. Where's your fiddle?" I told him I had come to hear them and had left it at home. Without a word he handed me his fiddle and picked up his accordion. Tom switched over to tin whistle and we began to play. It was one of the best times I ever had playing music, and one of the few chances I had to play with just Eddie and Tom.

Eddie was old school in many ways. His style of playing was straightforward, without a lot of added ornamentation. "I like to play the tunes straight," he told me. He liked tunes

in the basic keys - such as C, D, G, and E minor, and didn't see much point in deviating. "I think tunes in those keys sound the best on the fiddle," he once explained. He didn't read music, never drank a drop, and was unfailingly polite. If ever I'd pick him up for a session, he was always waiting with his coat on and fiddle in hand. Once I thanked him for something, and he said, "It's me should be 'tanking you for driving me." One time, I happened to offer him pasta salad from a buffet table during a session break. "I never tried it in me life," he said. He preferred potatoes. Another time, he described a Comhaltas event that had included a Mass complete with step dancers participating in the liturgy. "You wouldn't have believed it," he told me, "they step danced right in the middle of the Mass!" He couldn't quite get his mind around it.

In the last few years of Eddie's life, he became a regular at the weekly sessions at City Steam in Hartford hosted by P.V. O'Donnell. Some of us were lucky enough to be there as well, and what great memories we have of playing there with the two fiddlers from Donegal and Galway, looking over at Eddie with his soda - Coke, no ice – and his fiddle caked with rosin, as we played the Kilfenora jigs, the Fairy Queen hornpipe, Music in the Glen, or one of his marathon polka sets. And if you caught his eye during one of them, he'd wink at you, or throw in a wrong note, or holler out, or sometimes lilt a jig as he played it. His favorite reaction to enthusiastic applause was to lean over to P.V. and say "Well they liked it pretty good; I guess we'd better do it again."

There are many people who knew Eddie longer, and better, and could write many more things about him. Those of us who worked on compiling these tune sets were just a few of those privileged to know, learn from, and play with him in the later years of his life. In closing, I have to also mention tin whistle player Amy Bissell, who so often gave Eddie a ride to sessions, to our benefit and his, and who visited him so faithfully in his final illness. A year after his death, we still miss him very much, and the music is not the same without him. But we know that the music in heaven has gotten a little sweeter since his arrival, and we look forward to seeing him again.

Jeanne Freeman
March 30, 2006

Tom Walsh Appreciation

Tom Walsh did the lion's share of the musical notation work for this project. In speaking to him about it, it was apparent again and again that his only desire in working on this was to pay tribute to Eddie. He has told us that he felt Eddie never got the recognition he deserved in his lifetime. But it's difficult to discuss Eddie and his contributions apart from Tom. For so long, their names were intertwined in the minds of traditional players in this area. Although they really didn't begin to play frequently together until their retirement years, they shared so much music in those years that it's hard to think of one without the other. They listened to the same music and discovered in each other a

Eddie & Tom with Cindy Smith and Pat Kennedy: The Mountain Laurel Ceili Band

Ceili Band. They played privately just for the enjoyment of it, led sessions together, and played in bands together, including the Mountain Laurel Ceili Band and Celtic Melody.

But perhaps just as important as the music they shared, are the other things they had in common – a great sense of humor and steady good cheer, loyalty and devotion to their friends and families, helpfulness to others and, of course, good taste in the women they married. There was no taking anything too seriously, or allowing money, or prestige, or ego, to overtake the enjoyment of just playing music. So, as a photograph is a reverse image of its negative, in many ways this endeavor is as much about Tom and his music as it is about Eddie, although he'll not want us to say so. But we thank Tom here and now for everything he did for this project, and for all he gives us.

There is a story behind these sets!

"There is a story behind these sets. Eddie and I never could remember the names of all the tunes we played… partly because many of the tunes had more than one title… but mostly because we had so many tunes in our heads that remembering them was difficult."

"Over the years we learned the tune sets from the All Ireland Champion Ceili bands. Even before we started playing together we were learning the tunes from the LP's as they were played by each ceili band or solo players."

"That's why you would hear Eddie's answer to the question: "What's the name of that tune?" Eddie's reply would be: "That's from the Liverpool Ceili band, or the Tulla played them, or the Ballinakill which was Eddie's favorite Ceili band… he played with them before he came here."

"We identified the music by the performing band. Some bands had some of the tunes in different order from each other. God forbid that one band would play the music of its competition. Some ceili bands even gave their own titles to the tunes so that it would appear they composed it but it didn't take long for the others to wise up!"

Tom Walsh, Jan 2006

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals all of whom are owed a debt of gratitude and sincere thanks. First and foremost, there's our chief editor, transcriber, consultant, session leader, friend and great musician -- Tom Walsh. Without Tom, this project would certainly not have been possible. Thanks to fiddle player Jeanne Freeman who wrote the endearing Forward and also transcribed a few of the selections. John Kalinowski did the computer etch-a-sketch work and transcribed many of the selections. His wife, Nancy Murphy Kalinowski helped with the transcribing, transporting the edited copies of the tunes between Portland and New Britain, and doing the baking for those Sunday afternoon meetings. Special thanks to Jim Smith of www.blarneystone.com who has graciously offered the use of his website to provide a download site for this tune book. Jim also took the photos used with this tunebook. Jim's wife Cindy is a longtime member of the Mountain Laurel Ceili Band. Donegal fiddler P.V. O'Donnell continues to be an influence and inspiration by leading the weekly Hartford City Steam sessions, which Eddie would often attend. Those sessions still continue to play many of the sets in this tunebook. Thanks for the support of president Terry Sullivan and the entire membership of the Jim Seery-Paul Curry Branch of the Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, many of who are long time session players with Eddie. We received many words of encouragement, suggestions and tune selections from many of you. Eddie sure has a large musical family. Finally, we wish to thank Eddie's wife, Mary Burke and her family for their support in this project.

From all of us, we offer this collection as a small tribute to Eddie in recognition of how much he meant to so many players who knew him and played with him.

Public License

This project was a labor of love for everyone involved. It is free for downloading and may be copied, distributed and shared by anyone, as long as there is no monetary exchange.

A copy of the downloadable PDF file of this tunebook can be found at http://blarneystone.com/eddie

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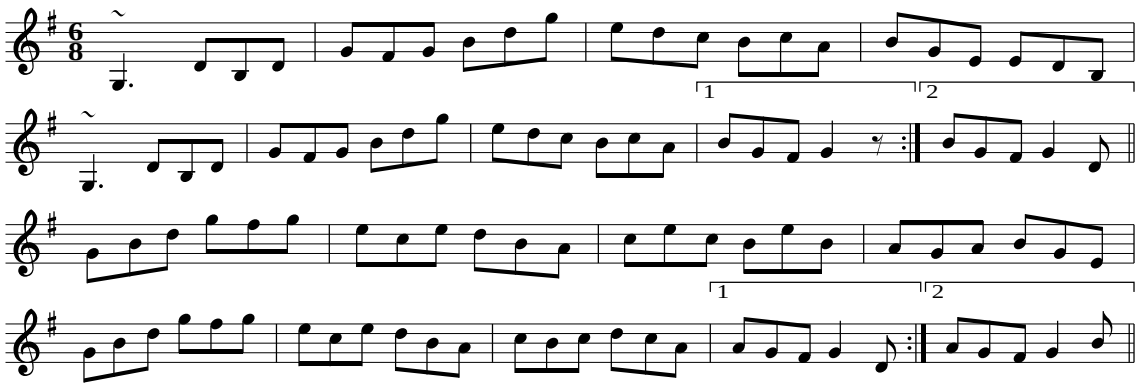
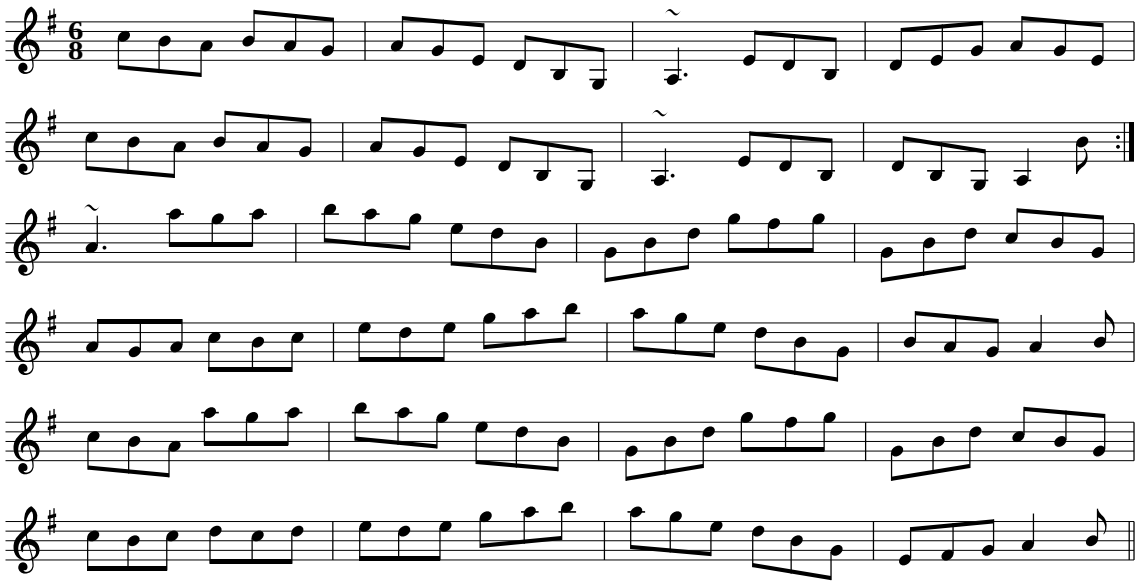
Bush on the Hill, Sean Ryan's, Tripping Up the Stairs

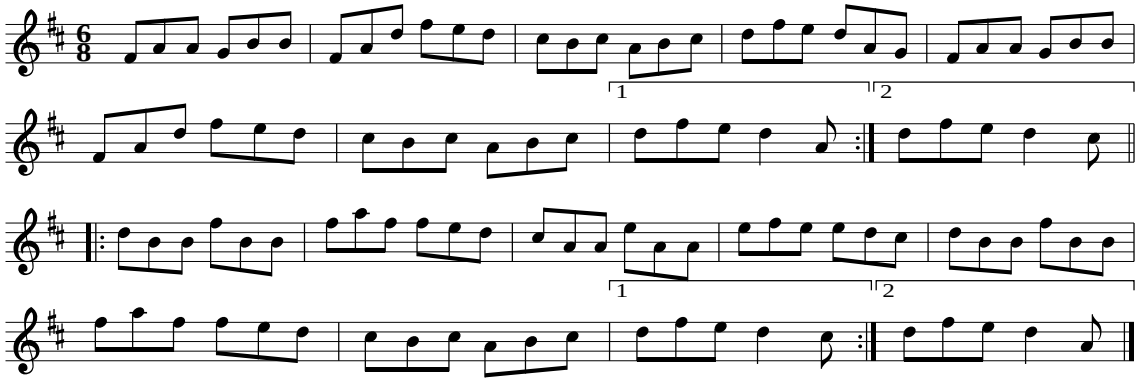
Bush on the Hill



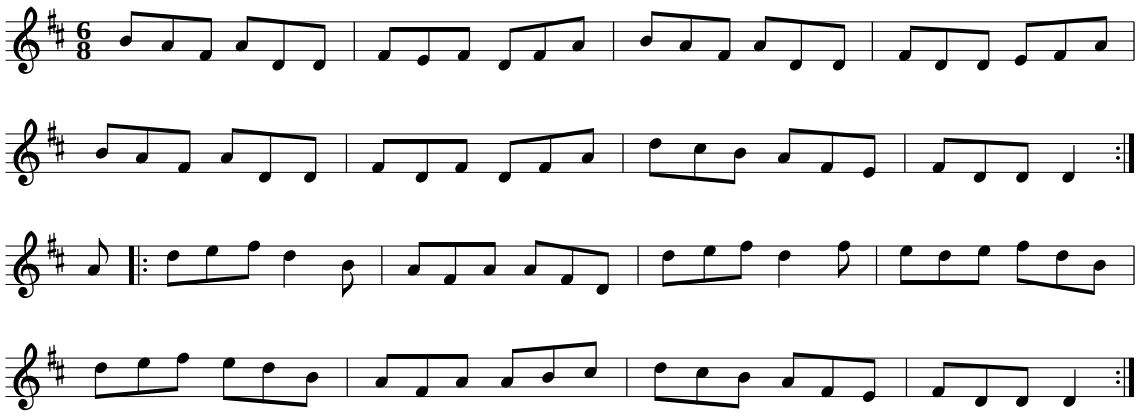
Sean Ryan's (aka Lonesome Jig)



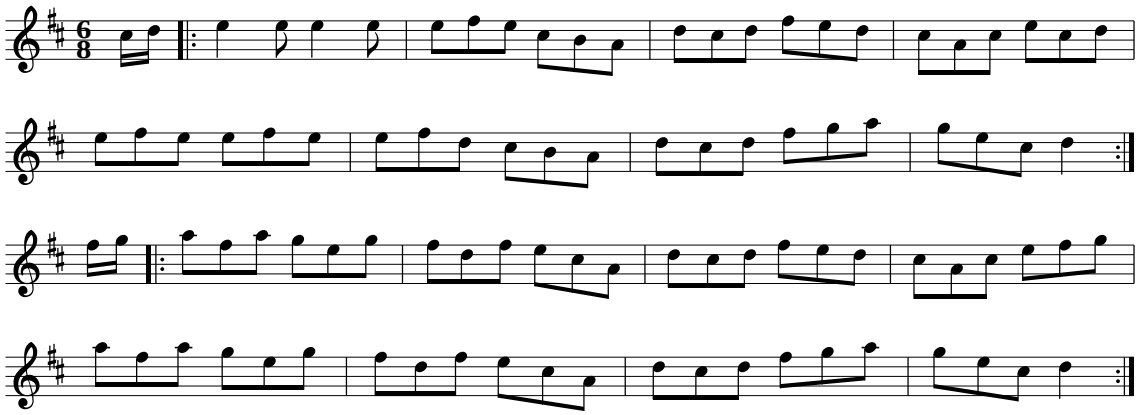
Tripping Up the Stairs (aka Sackows) (aka Pride of Kildare)



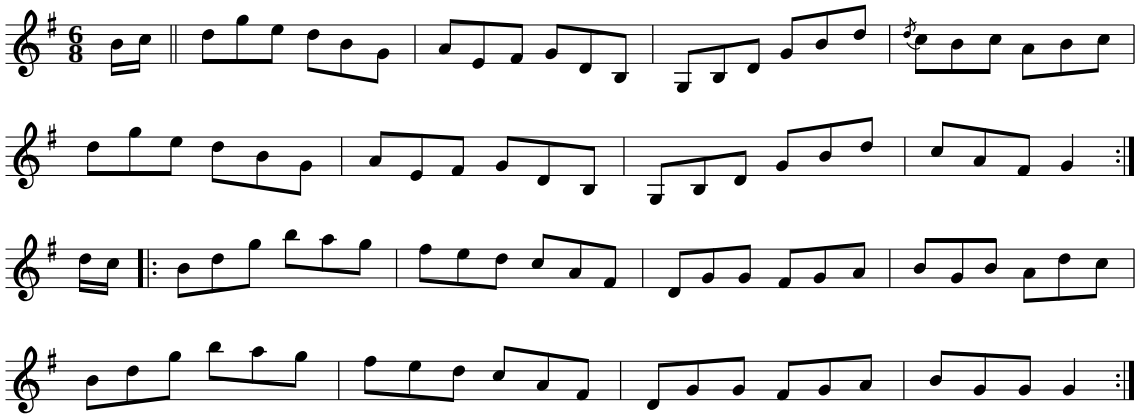
Humours of Glendart, Priest and His Boots, Father Tom’s Wager



Priest and His Boots

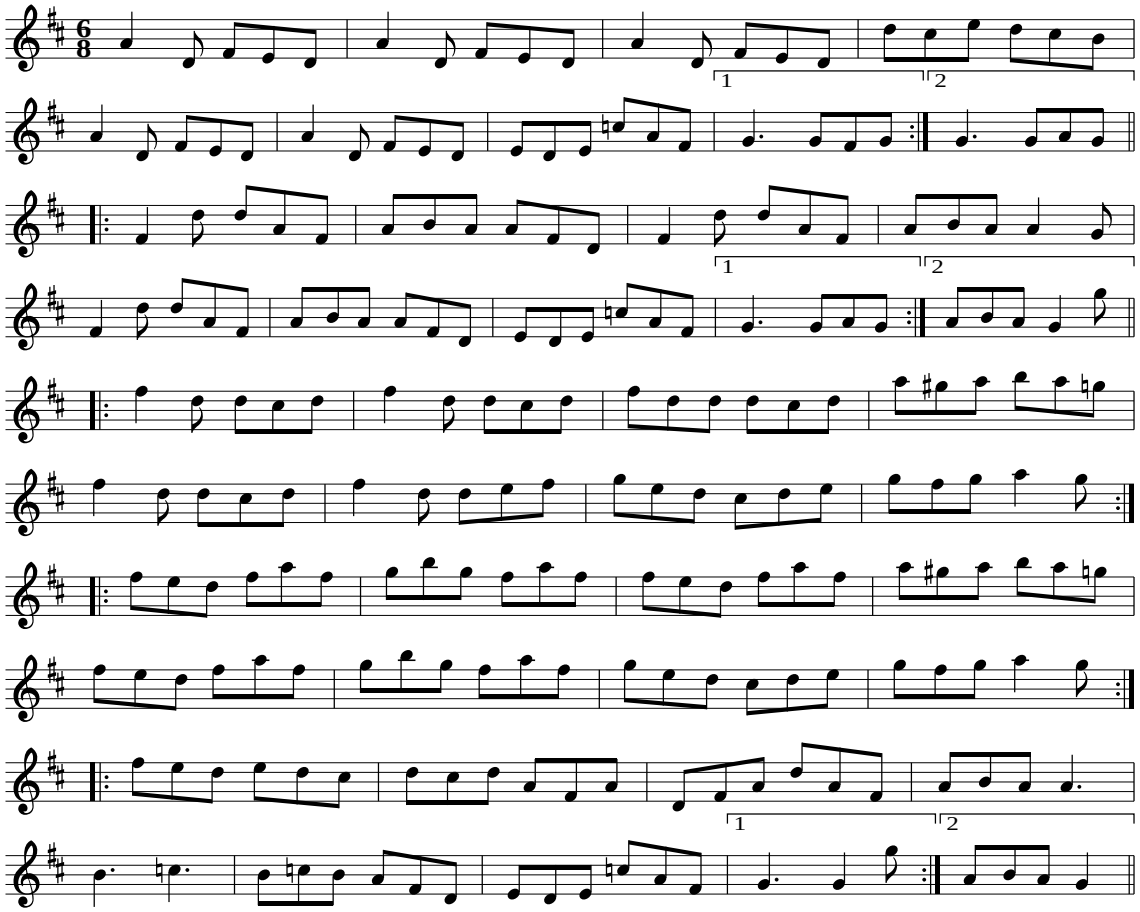


Father Tom’s Wager

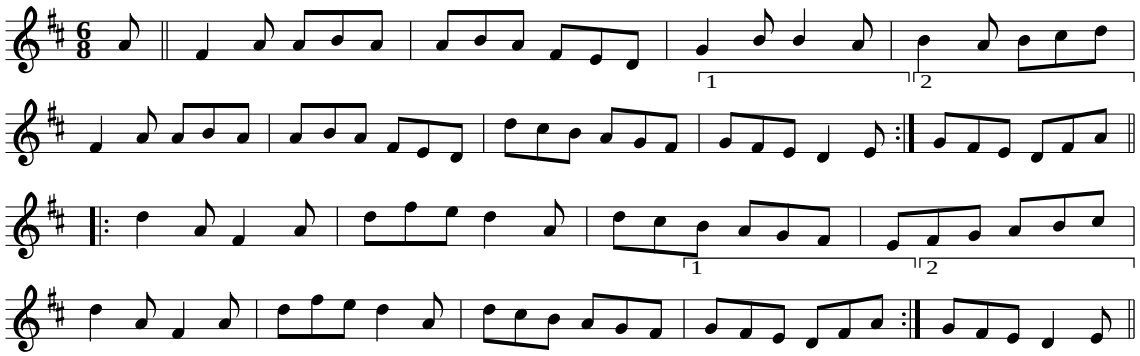


Kilfenora Jig Set

Kilfenora Jig I



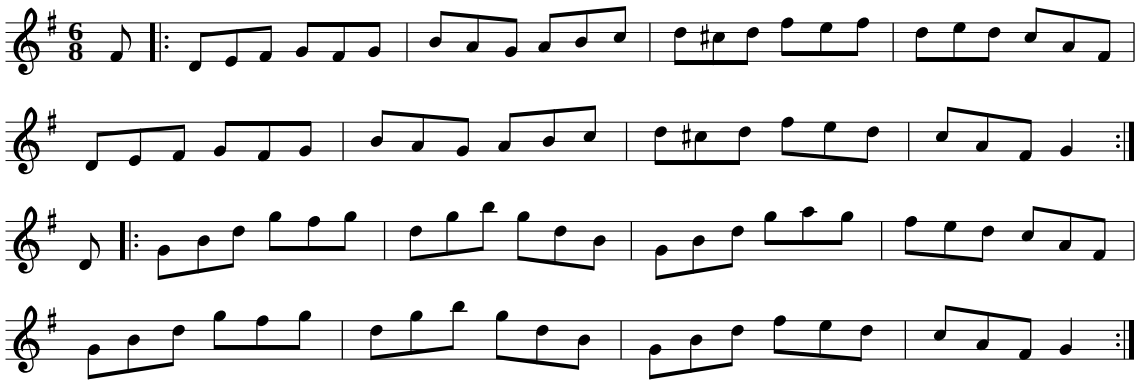
Kilfenora Jig II



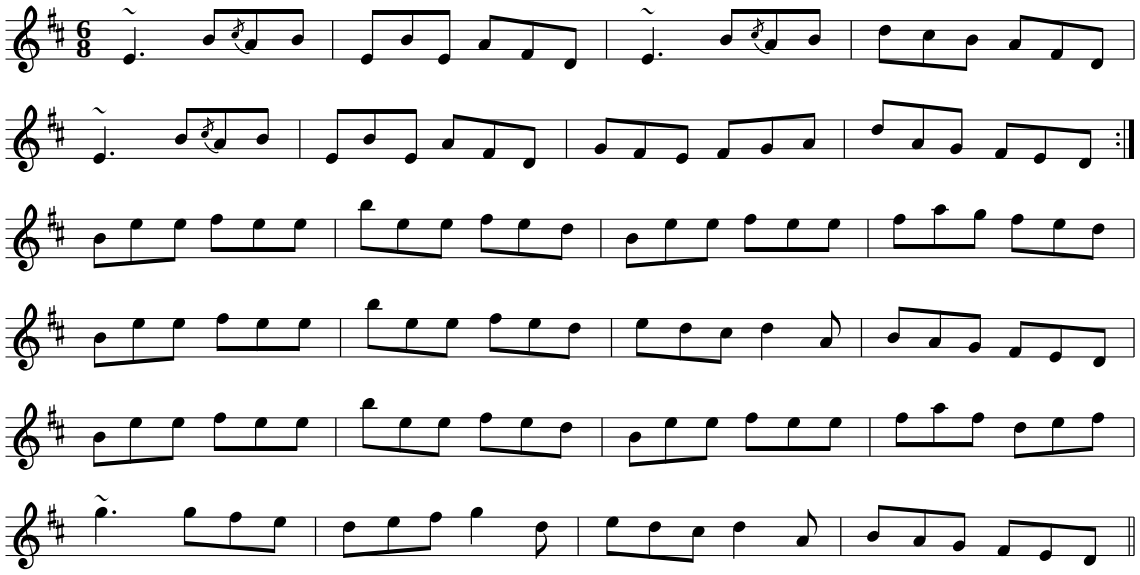
Tom Walsh says, "We used to add Frieze Britches to the Kilfenoras when playing a Siege of Ennis Dance." Eddie always sang the last line of the 1st Kilfenora Jig.

Killimer, Morrison's, Knights of St Patrick

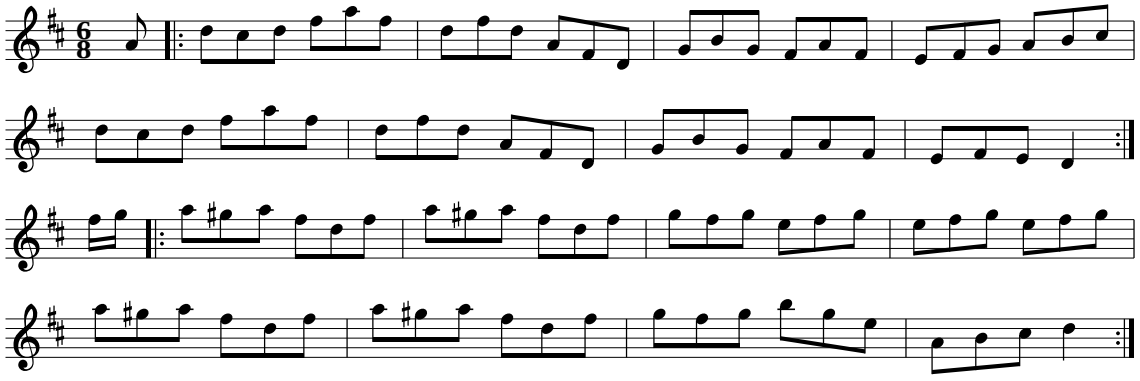
Killimer Jig, The



Morrison's

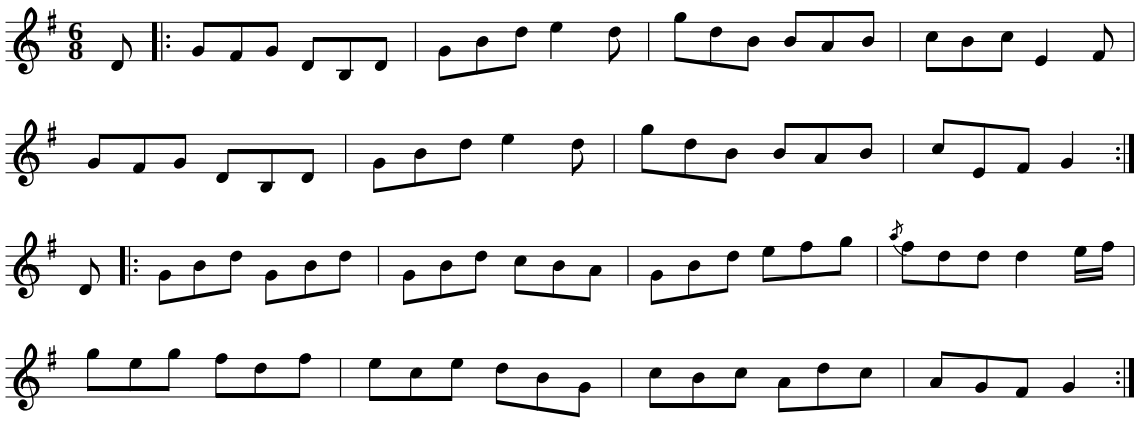


Knights of Saint Patrick

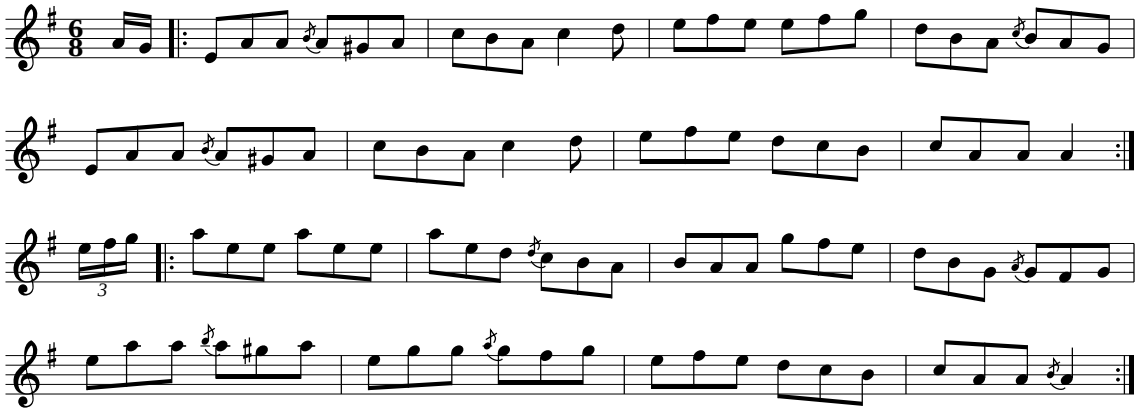


New York Jig Set

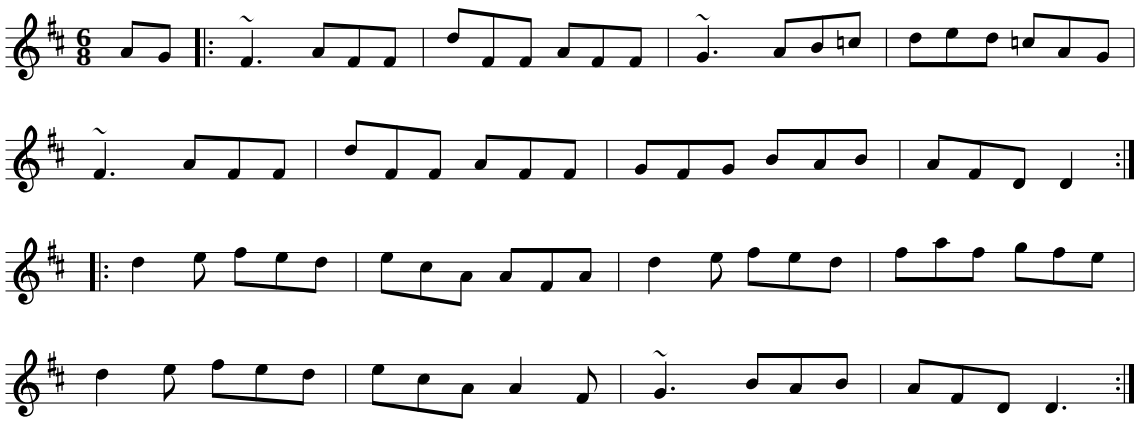
New York Jig



Wellington's Advance

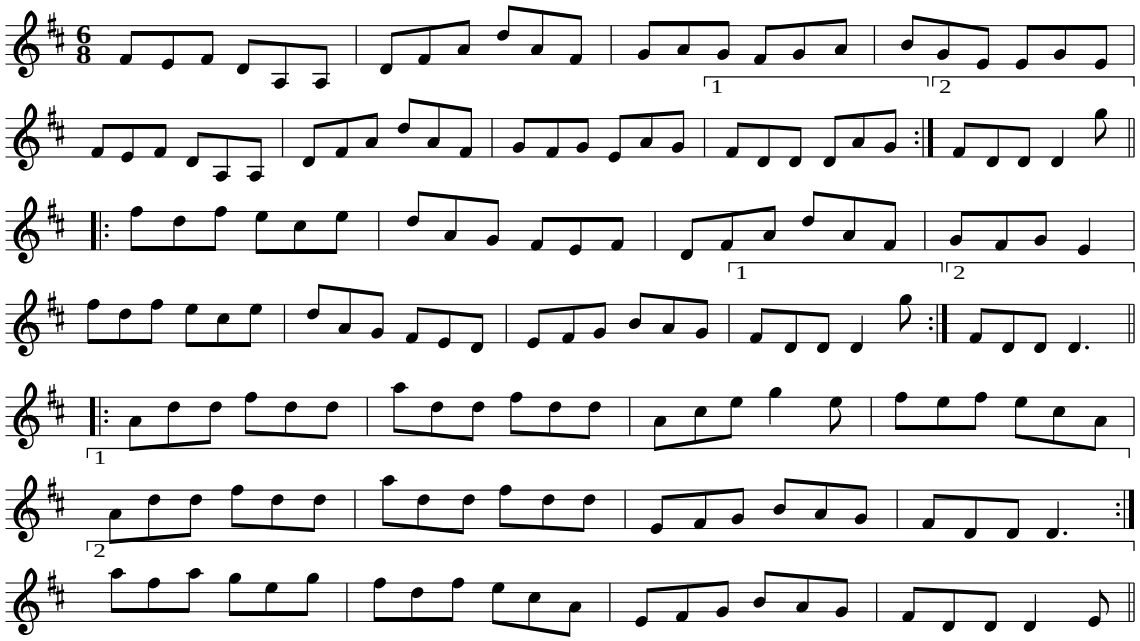


Rambling Pitchfork

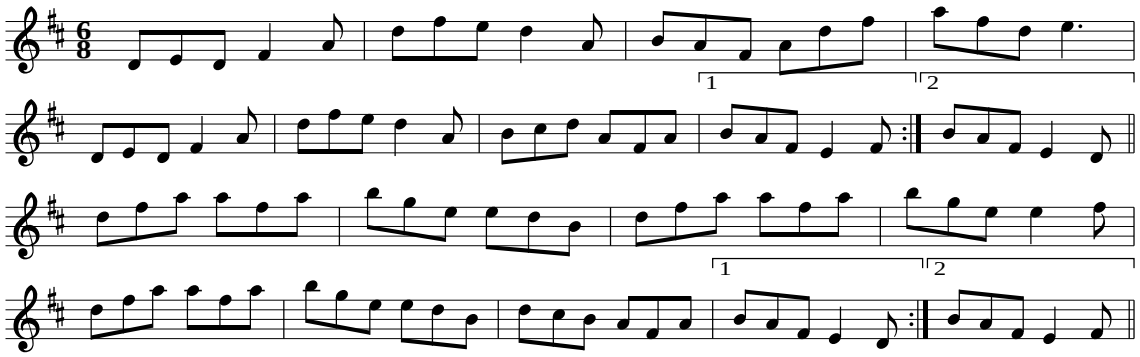


Queen of the Fair, Carraroe, Out on the Ocean

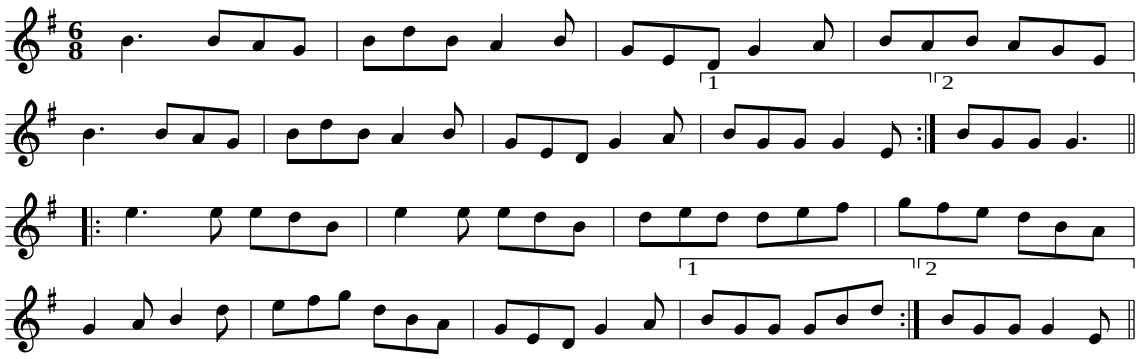
Queen of the Fair



Carraroe Jig

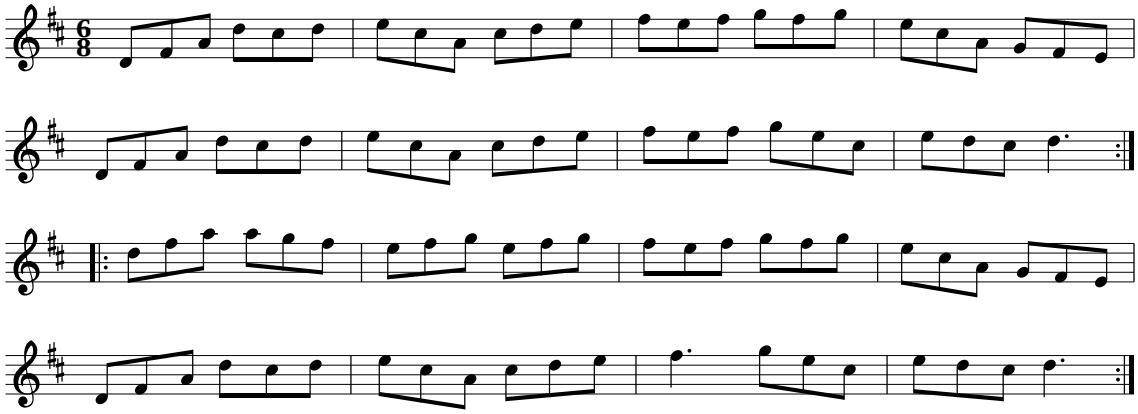


Out on the Ocean

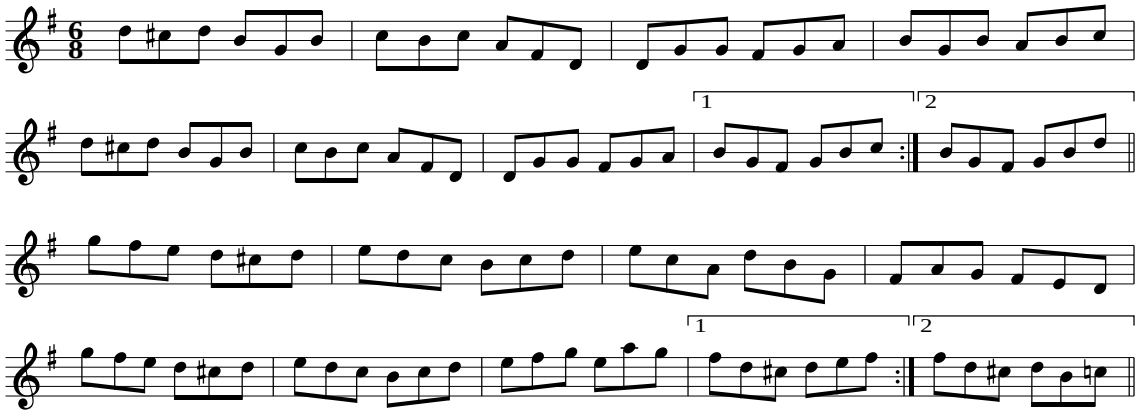


Tobins, Trip to the Cottage, Rambling Pitchfork

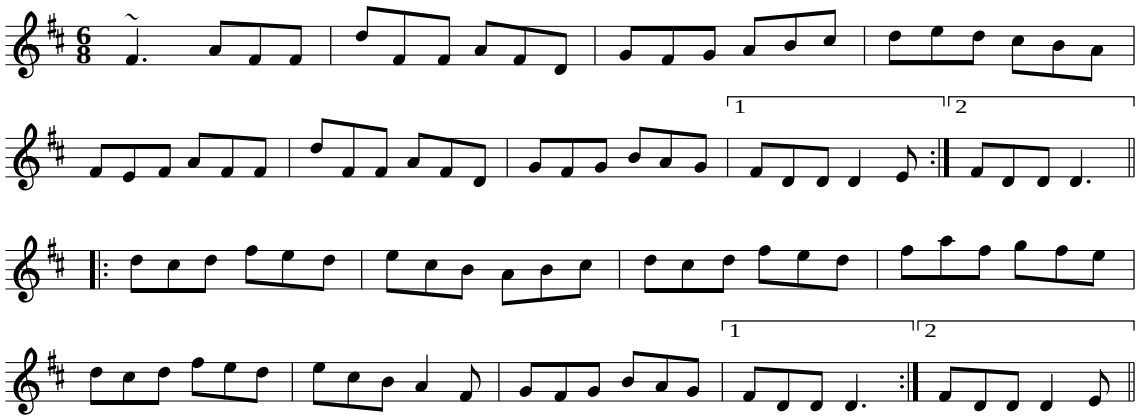
Tobin's Favourite



Trip to the Cottage

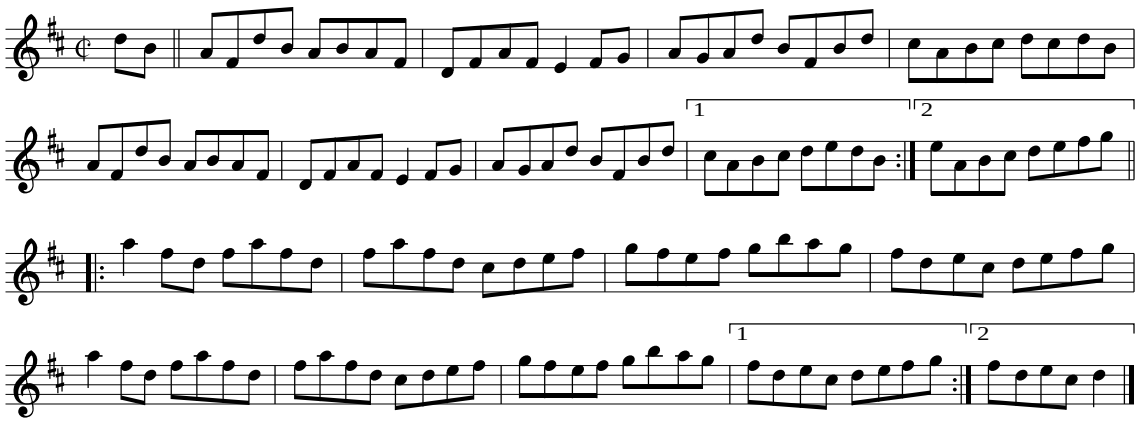


Rambling Pitchfork, The

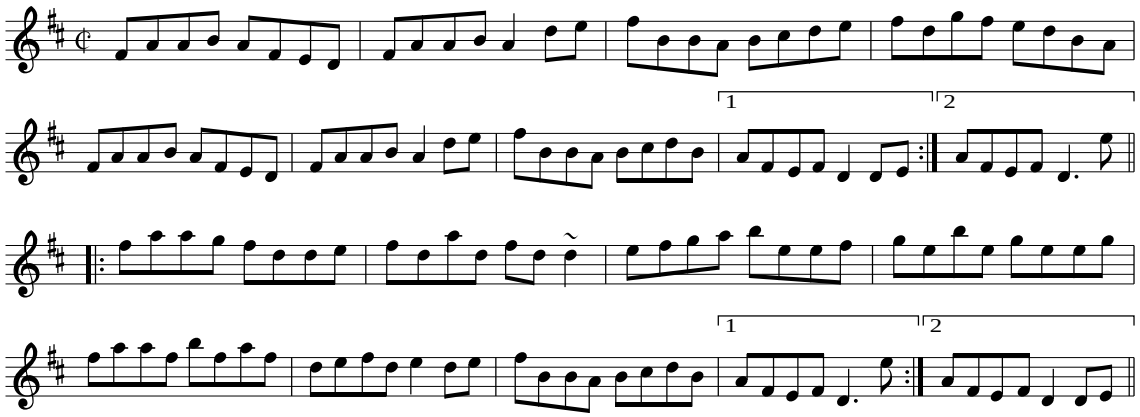


Bonnie Kate, Maid Behind the Bar, Bag of Spuds

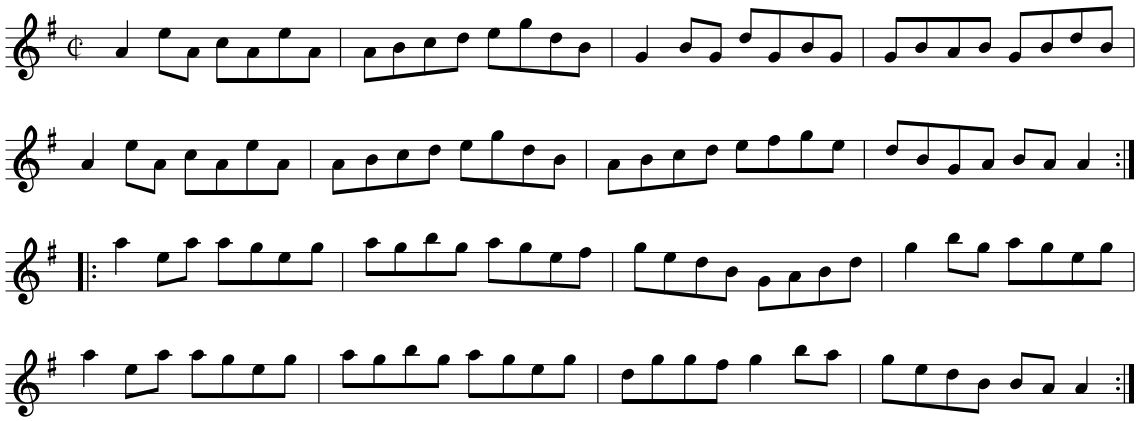
Bonnie Kate



Maid behind the Bar, The

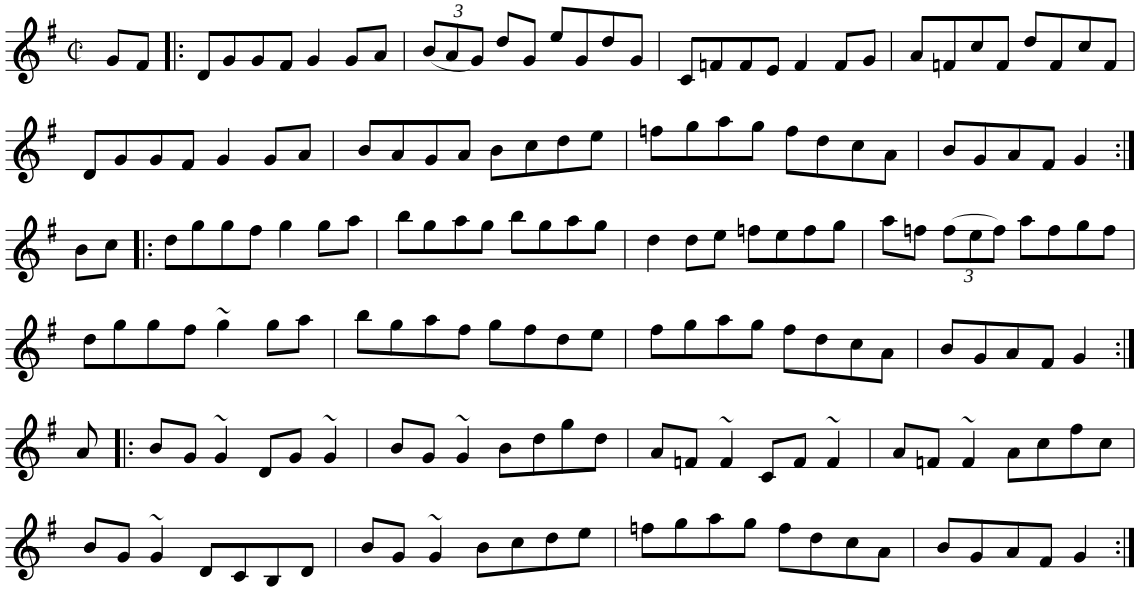


Bag of Spuds, The

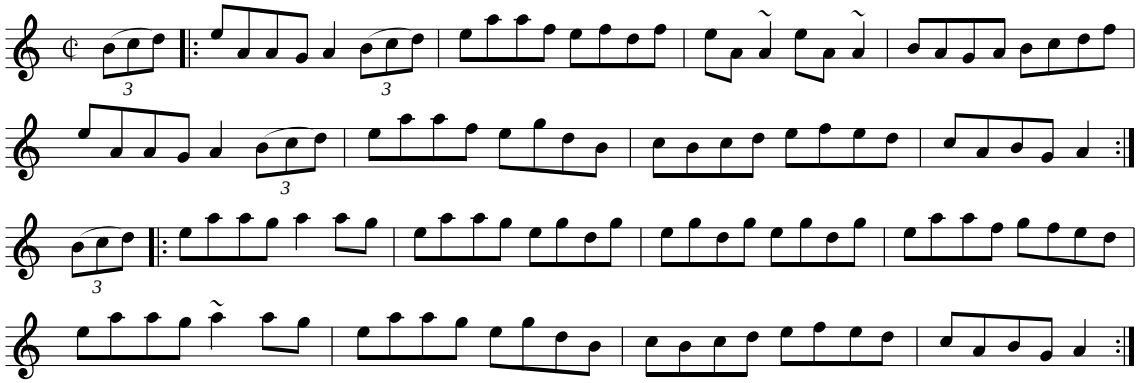


Bunch Of Keys, Congress, Green Gates

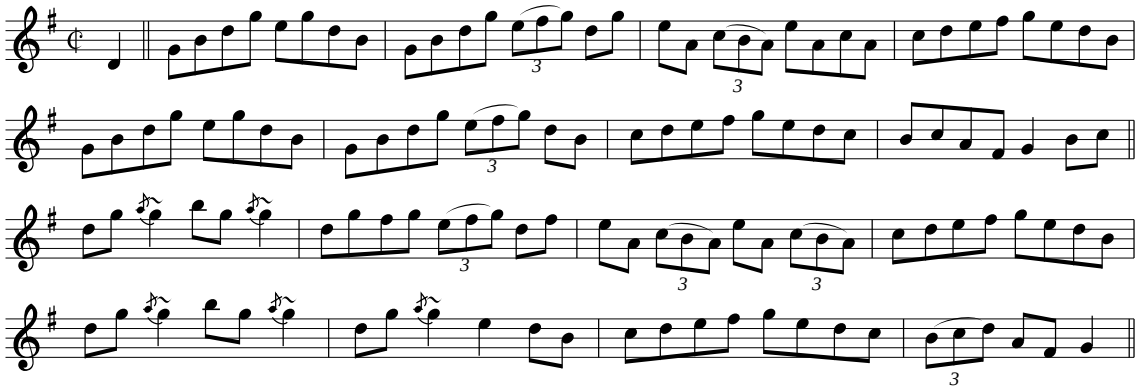
Bunch of Keys



Congress Reel

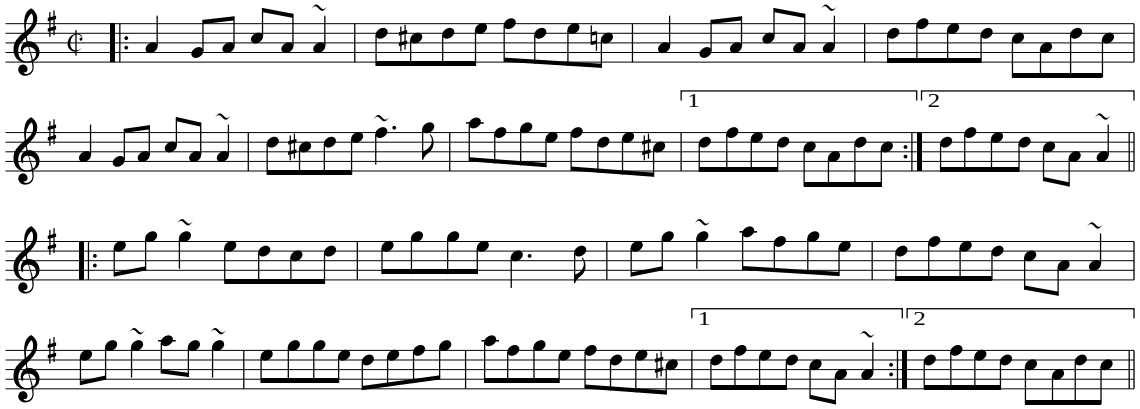


Green Gates

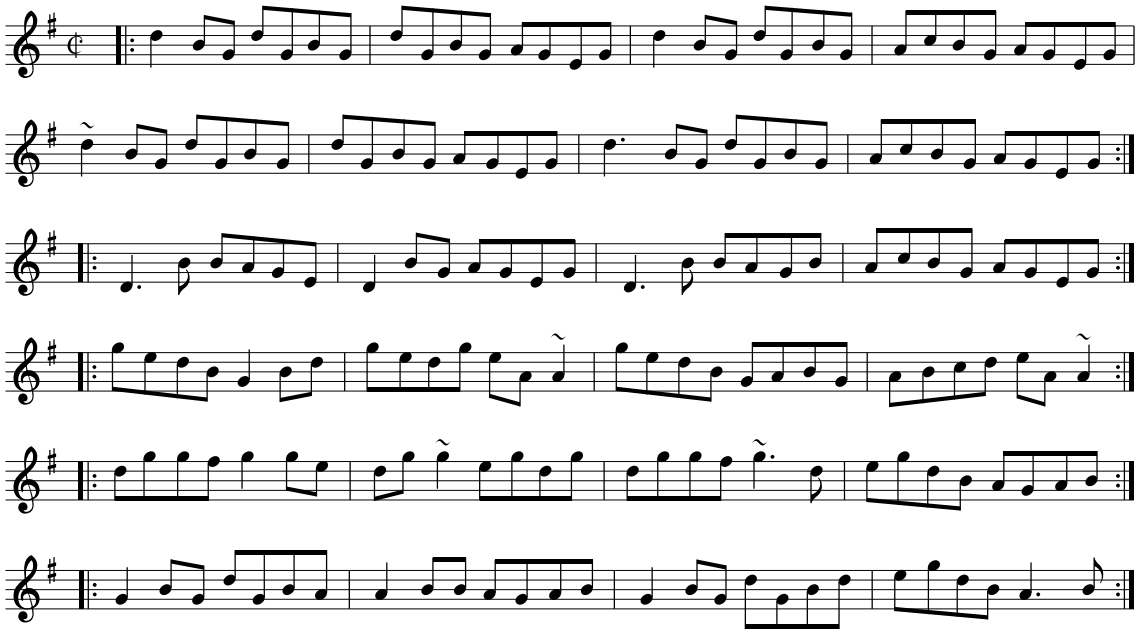


Bush Reel, Foxhunter, Drowsy Maggie

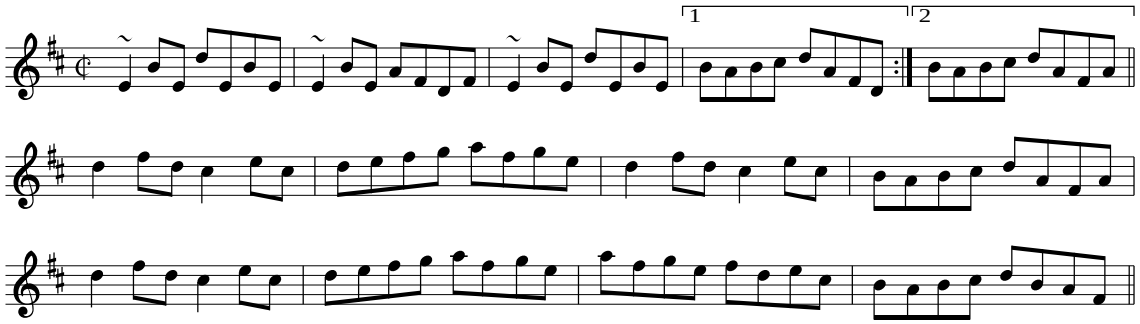
Bush Reel (The Old Bush)



Foxhunter's Reel

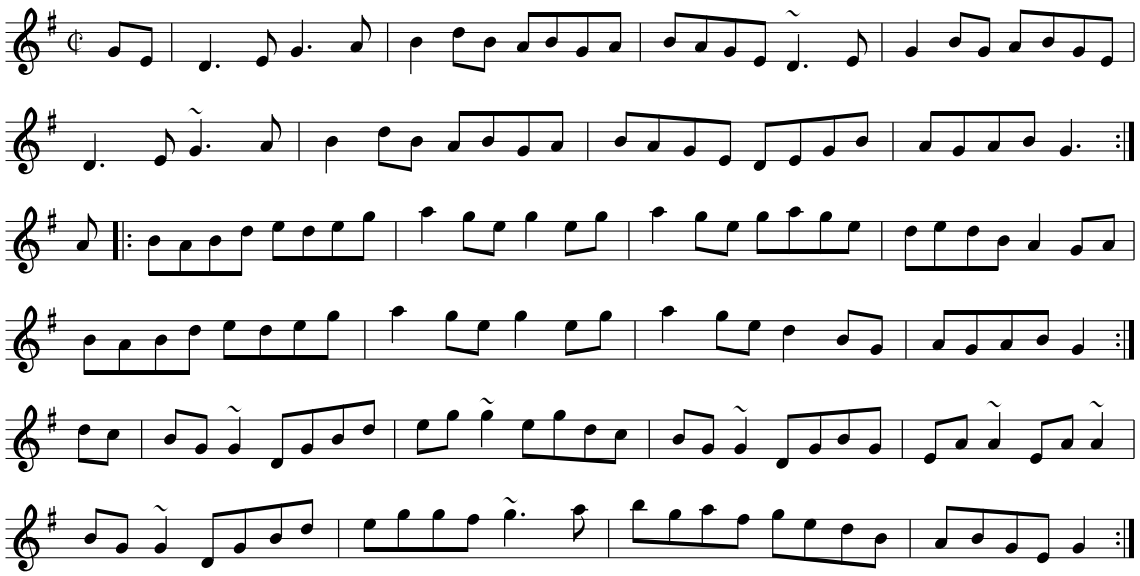


Drowsy Maggie

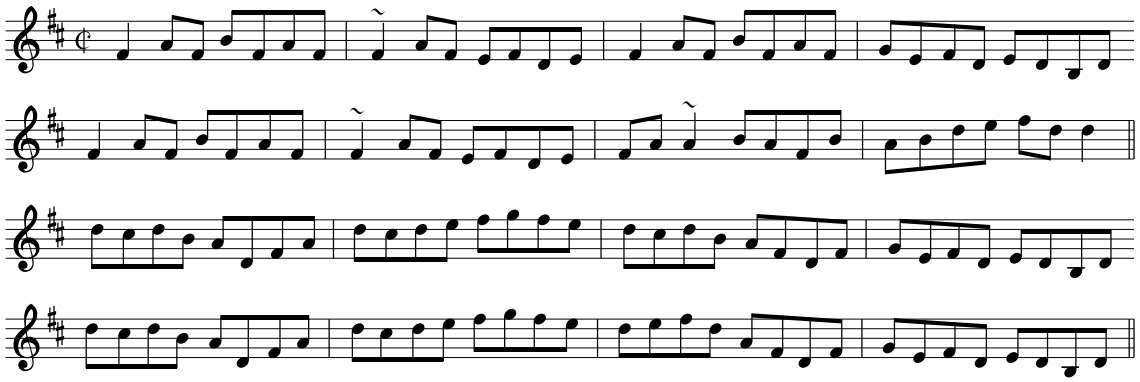


Christmas Eve, Mountain Road, Glen Allen

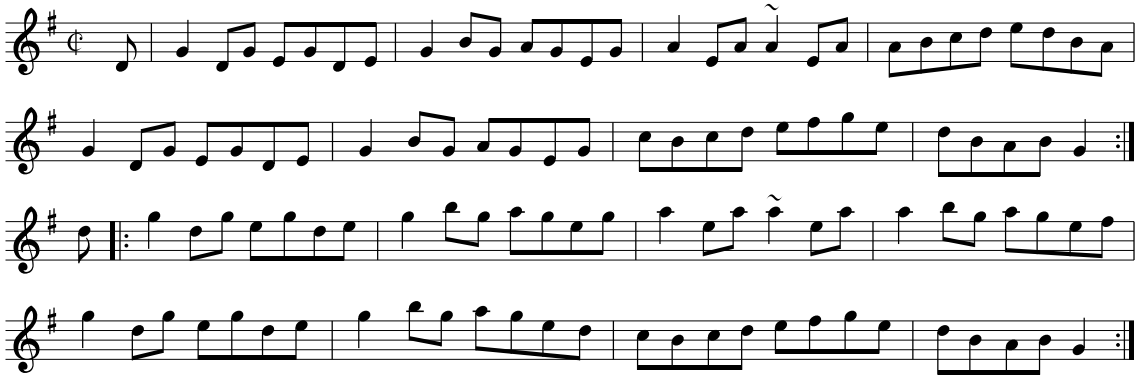
Christmas Eve



Mountain Road

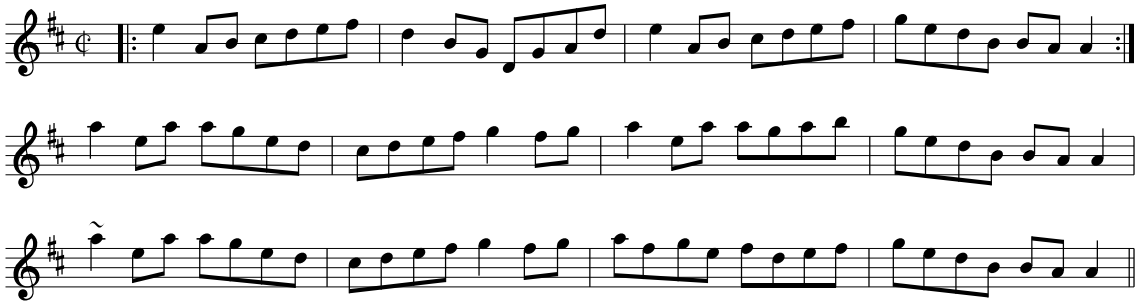


Glen Allen

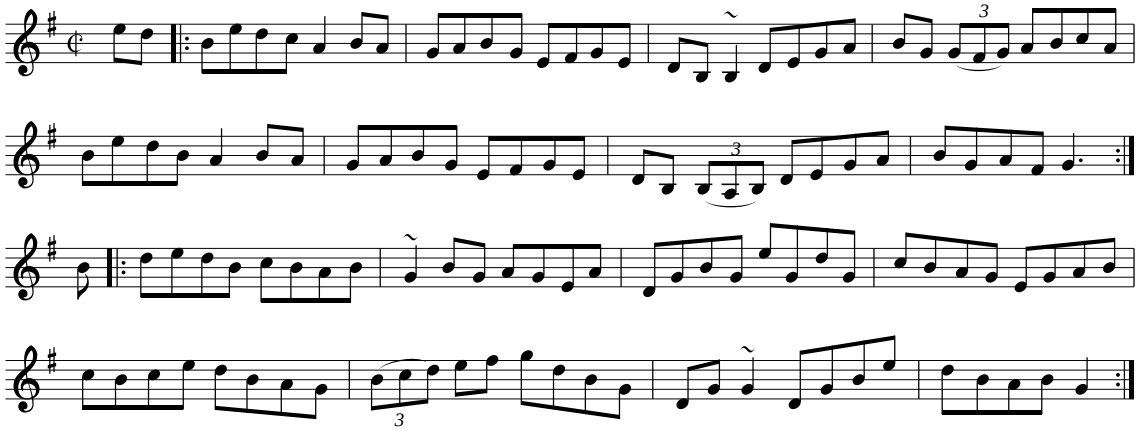


Eel in the Sink & Larry Redican’s

Eel in the Sink

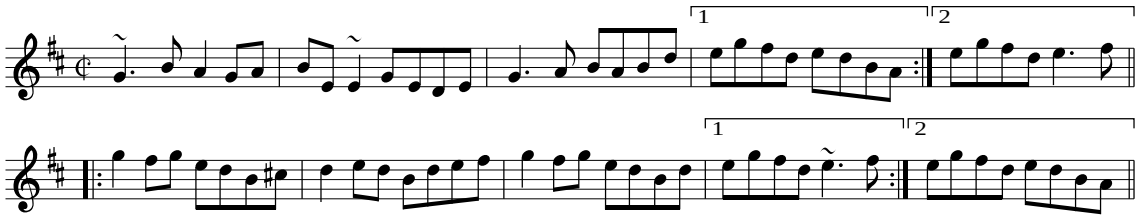


Larry Redican’s

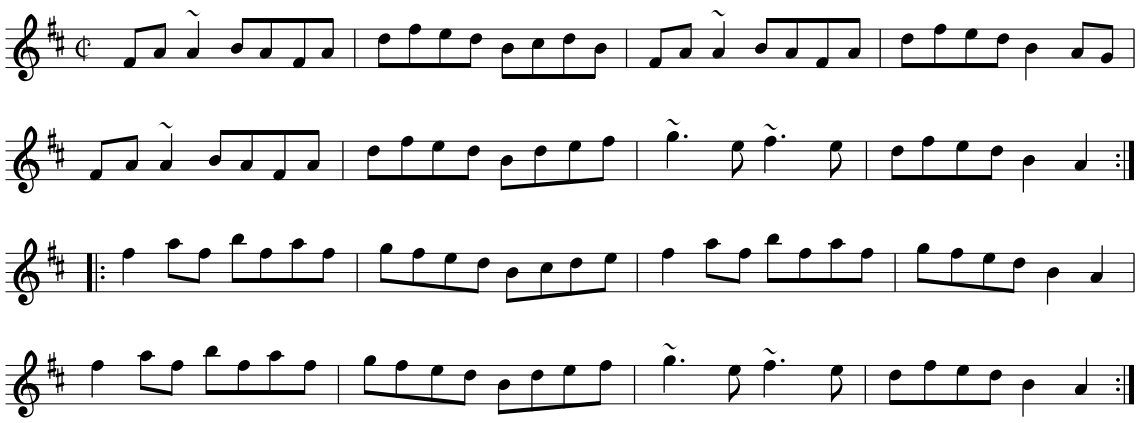


Hare’s Foot, Silver Spear, Cregg’s Pipes

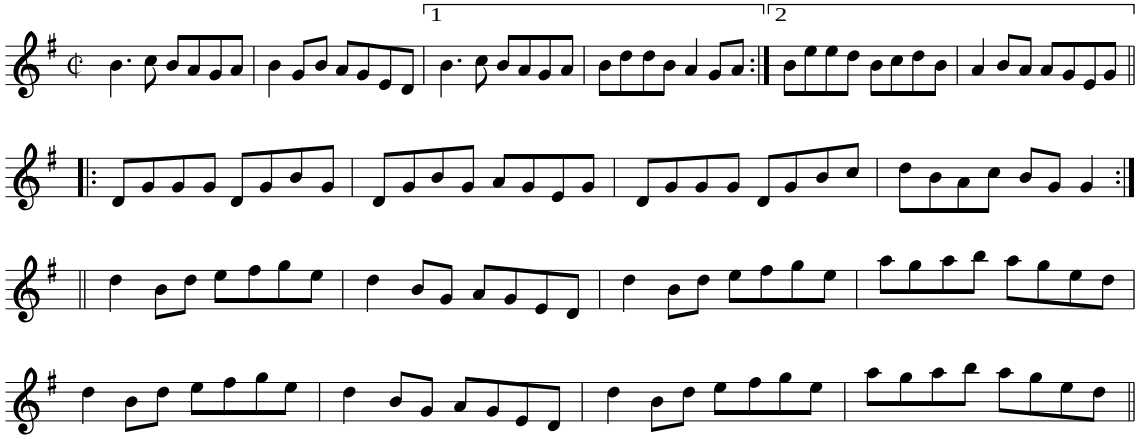
Hare’s Foot



Silver Spear



Cregg’s Pipes

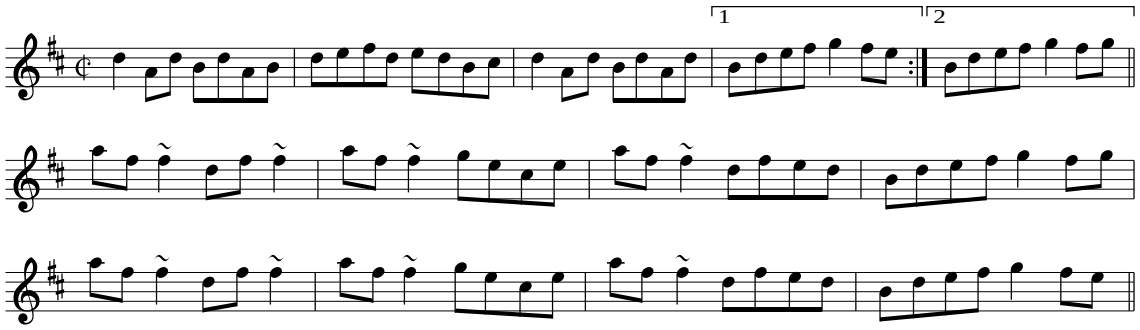


Cregg’s Pipes aka Craig’s, Greig’s, Grieg’s, Gregg’s... probably more.

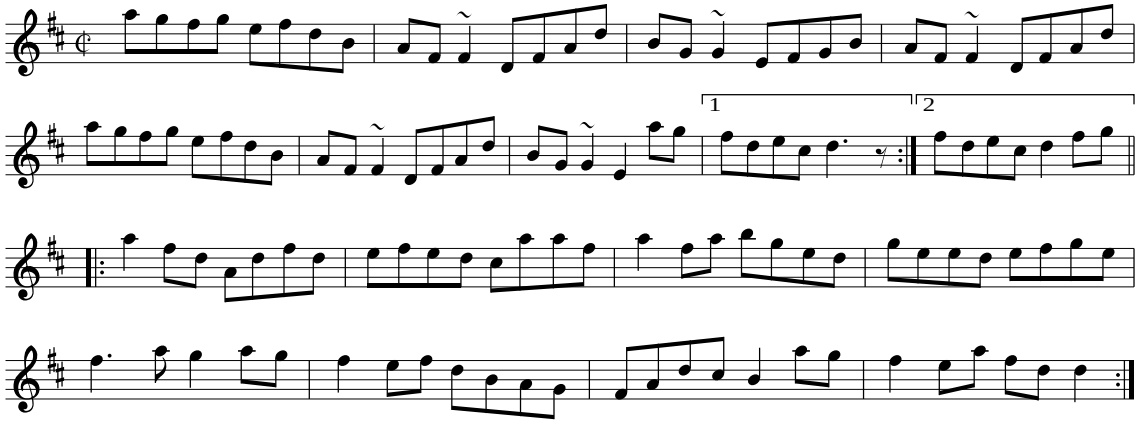
We’re calling it Cregg’s Pipes in honor of bodhran player Jimmy Cregg who passed away in 2005.

Humours of Tulla, Skylark, Roaring Mary

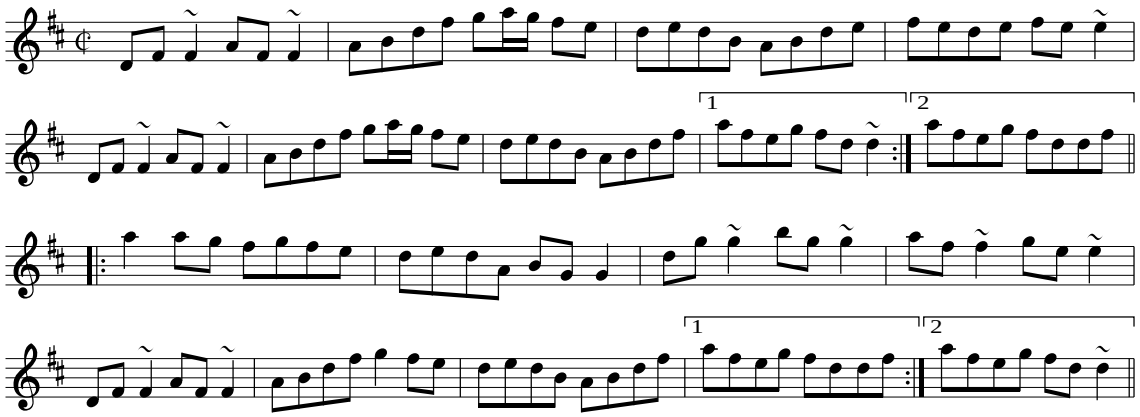
Humours of Tulla



The Skylark

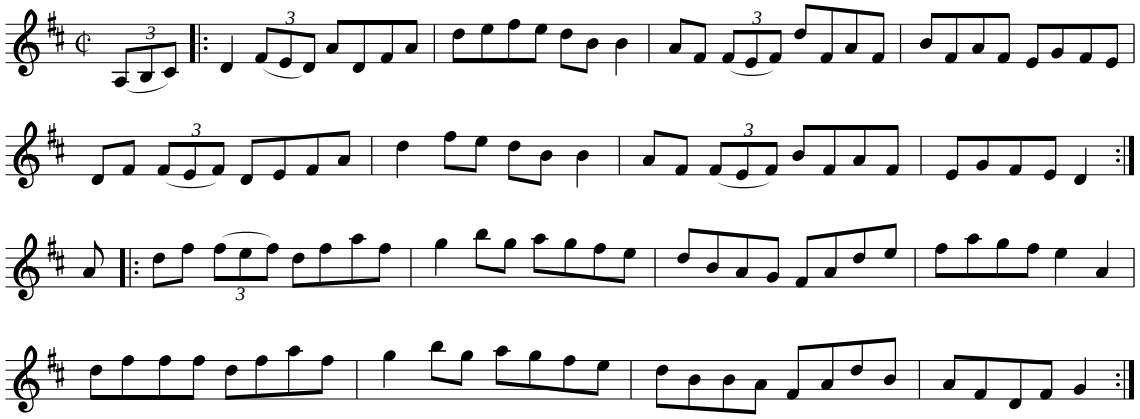


Roaring Mary

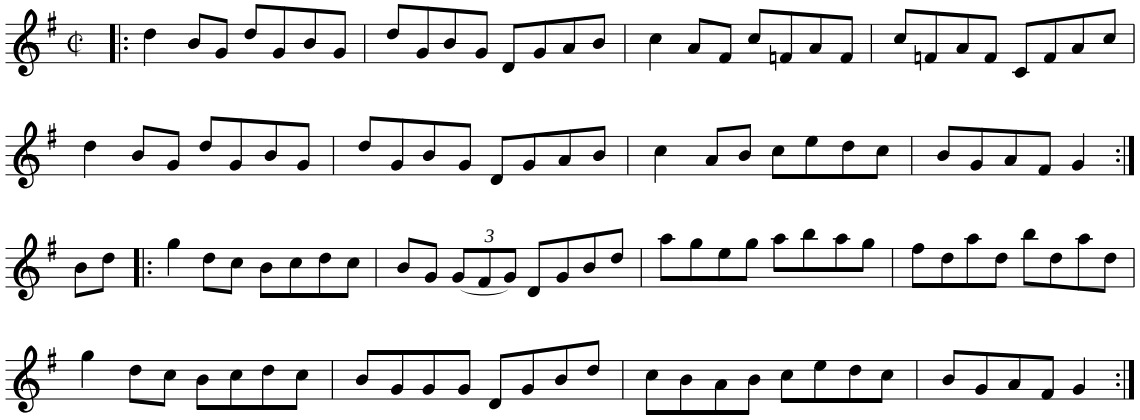


McDermotts, Morning Mist, Martin Wynne's

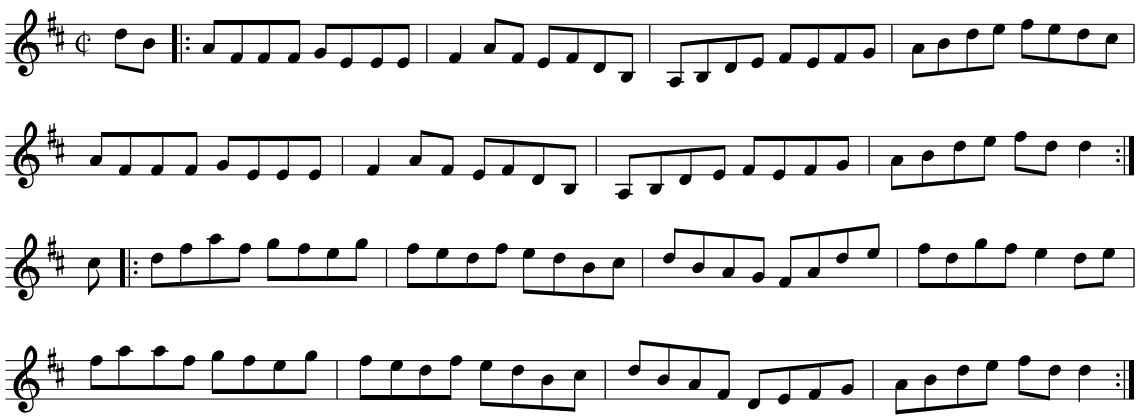
McDermott's



Morning Mist

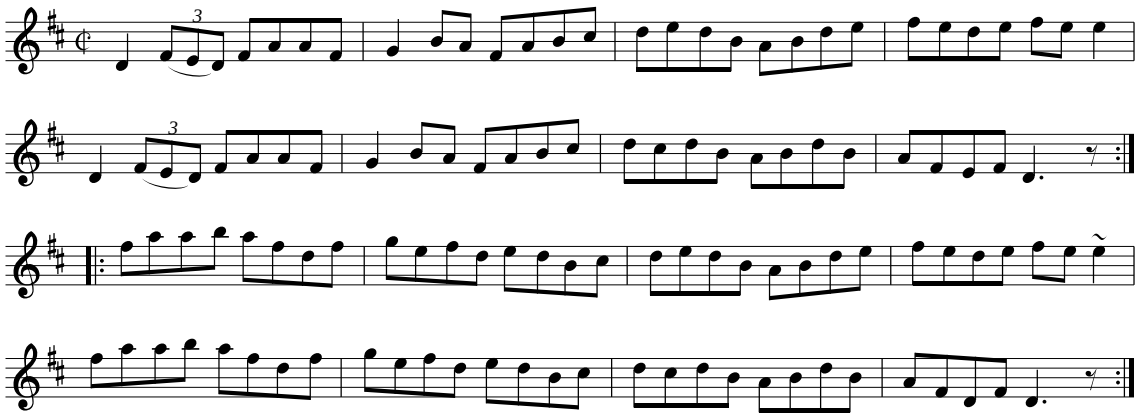


Martin Wynn's #2

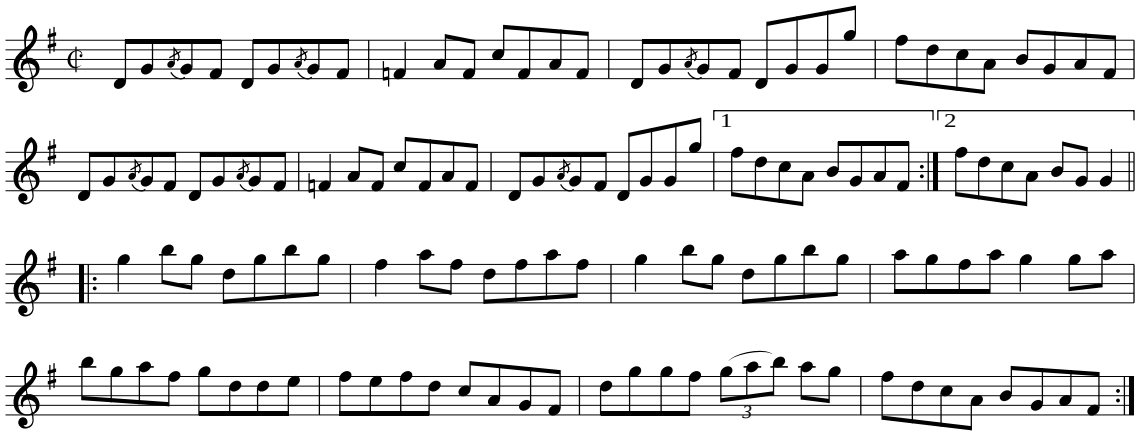


Miss Monaghan's & Ewe Reel

Miss Monaghan's

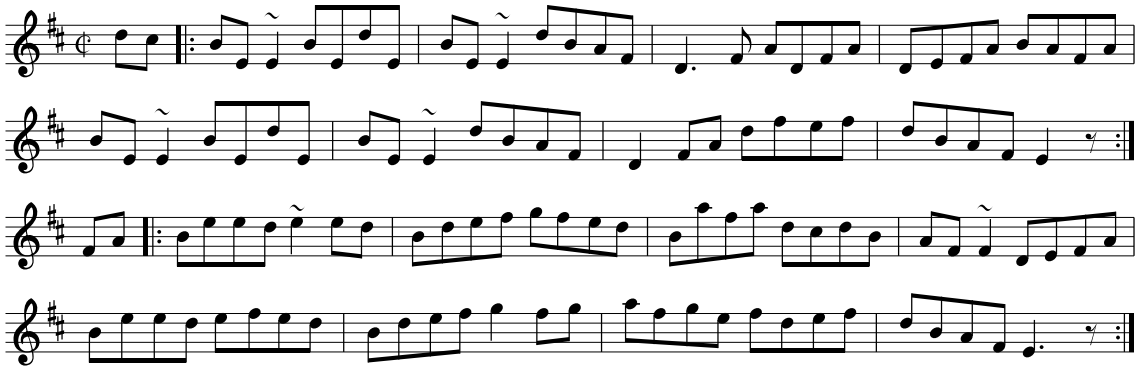


Ewe Reel, The

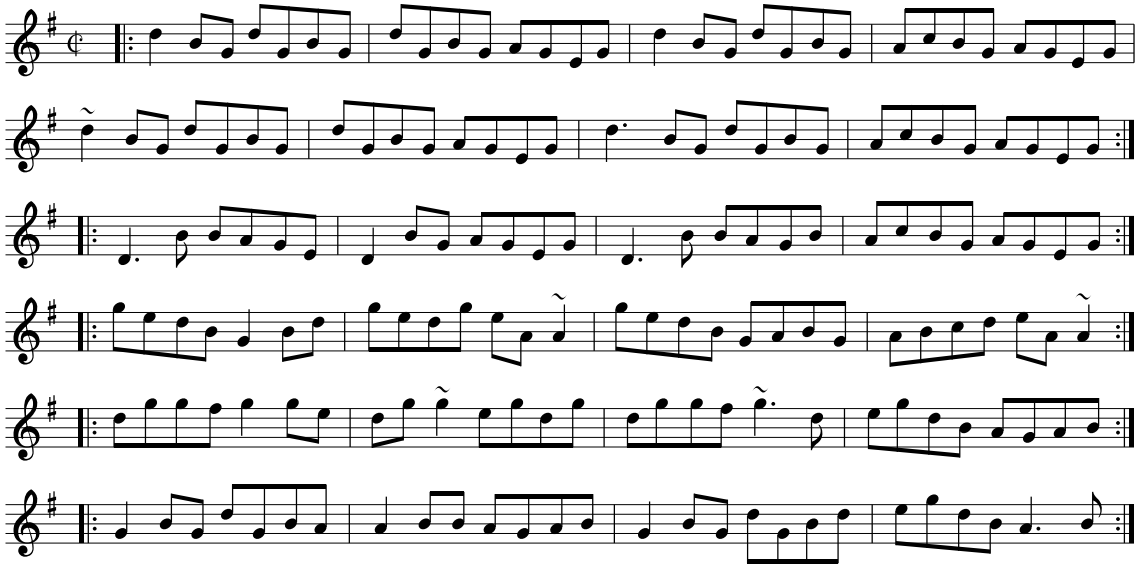


Pigeon on the Gate, Foxhunter's, Drowsy Maggie

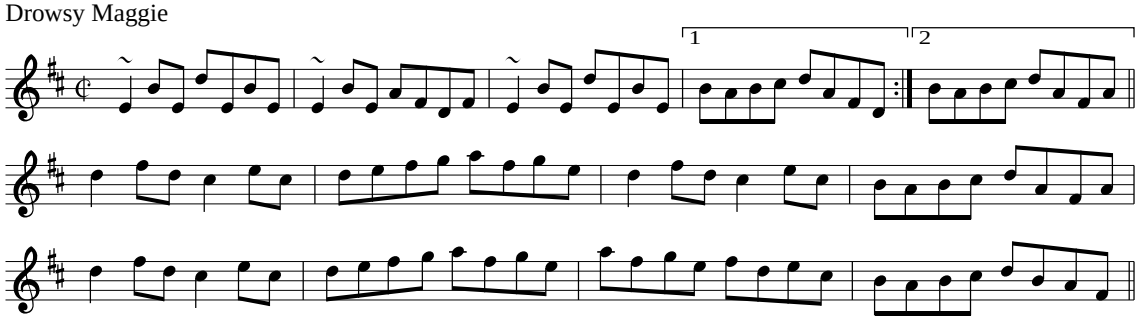
Pigeon on the Gate, The



Foxhunter's Reel



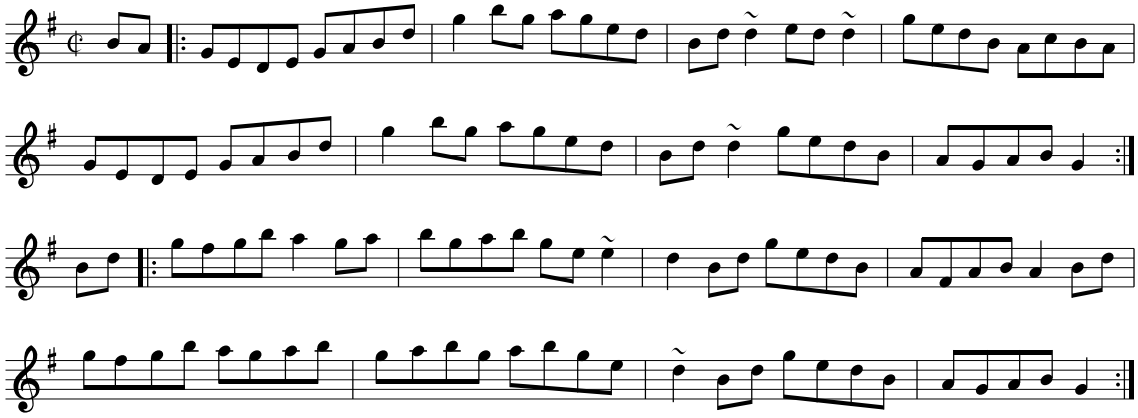
Drowsy Maggie



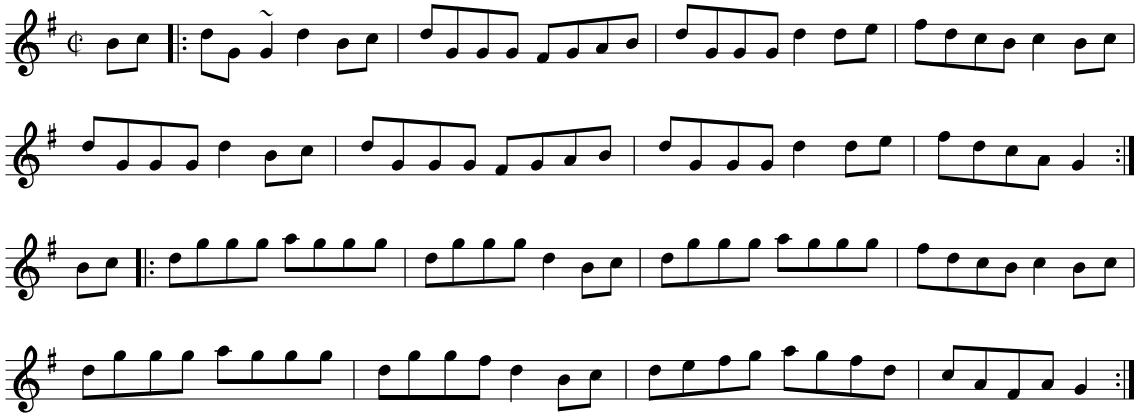
The 2nd and 3rd tunes are the same as the Bush Reel set. As Tommy explains it, "We played them at different time periods....Mae Duffy liked Pigeon On the Gate for her dancers.....I think we started out with the Bush Reel set and kind of dropped it for the Pigeon....which I never cared for!"

Plough and the Stars & Mrs. Crotty's

Plough and the Stars



Mrs. Crotty's (aka Kitty's Gone A−Milking)

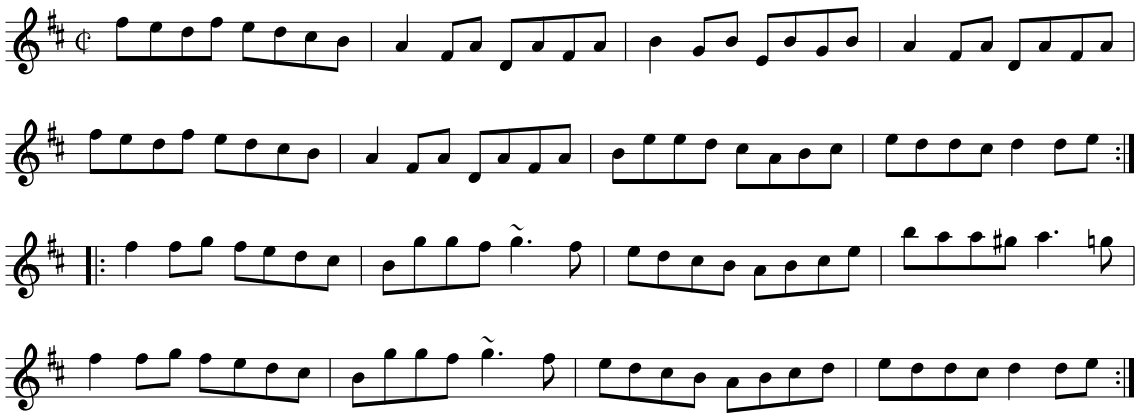


Jack Wade's ceili band played that (this set of tunes) and one of the unique things about his music −− this was back in the 50's −− is that when they would play a set of tunes −− to make the effect that he wanted he would repeat the first tune. So if it was a three tune set, he'd play the first tune, the the second tune, then back to the first tune one time only.

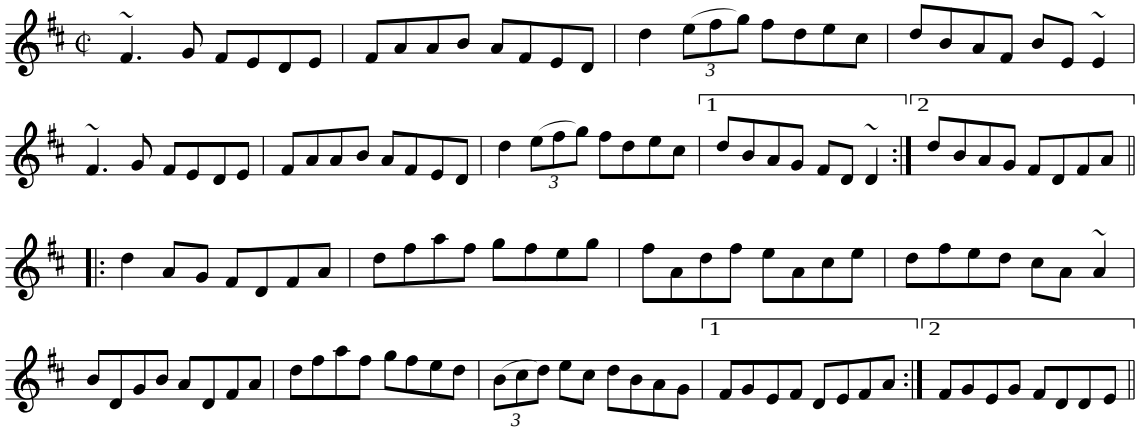
Tom Walsh, Jan 2006

Saint Annes, Tinker Doherty's, Bird in the Tree

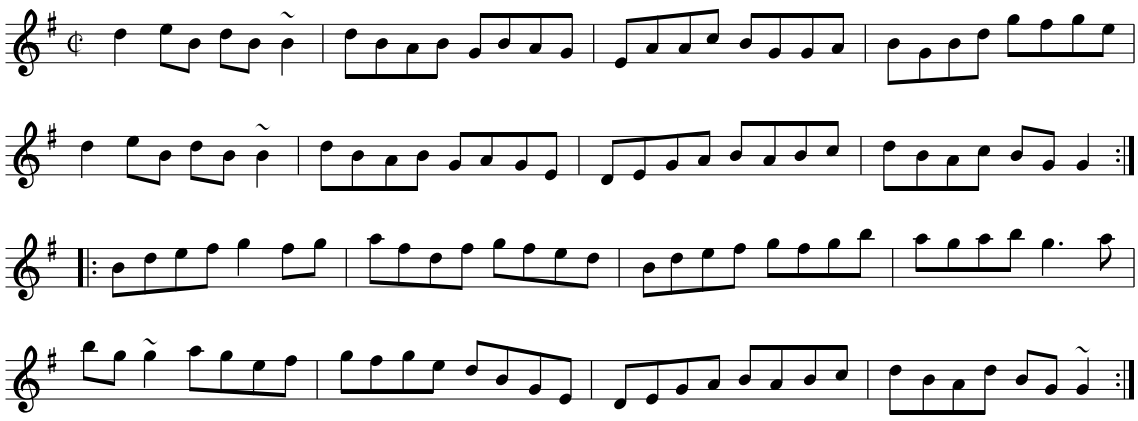
Saint Anne's Reel



Tinker Doherty's (aka Wise Maid)

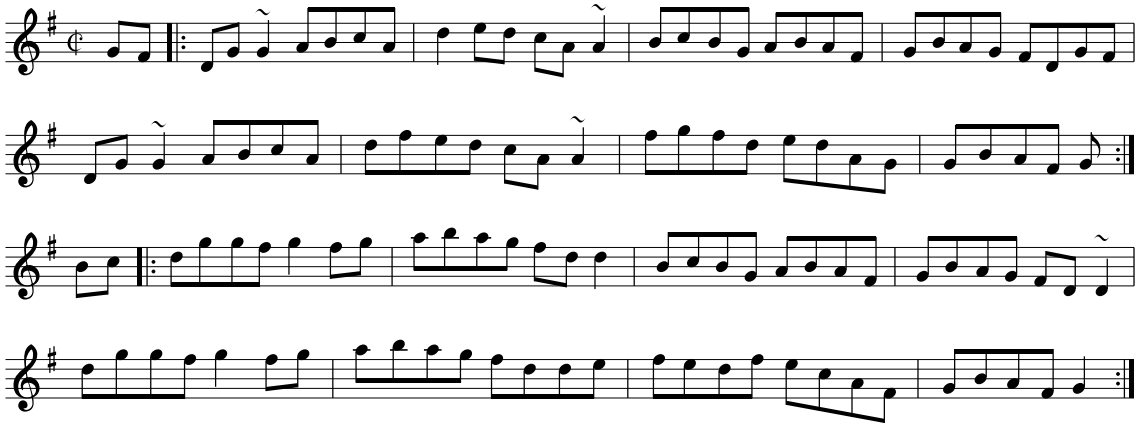


Bird in the Tree

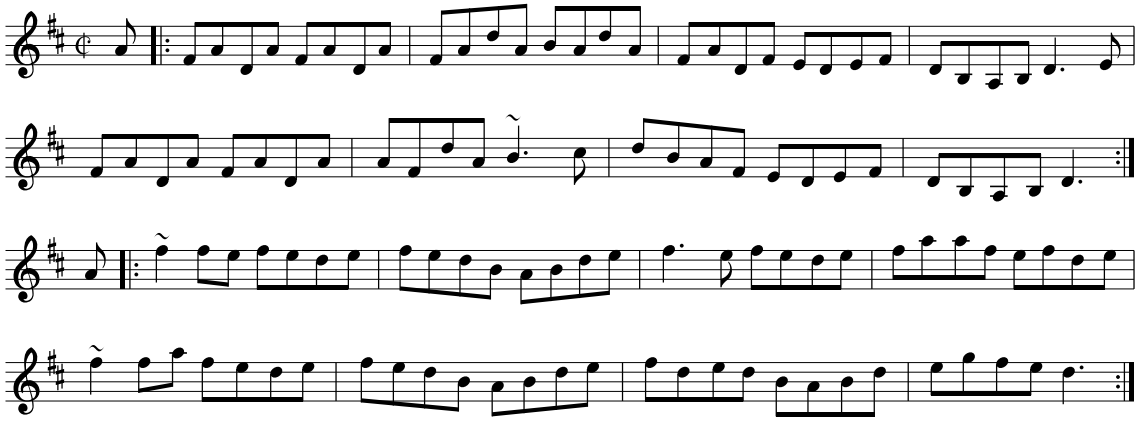


Shaskeen Reel, Lady Anne Montgomery, Maud Millar

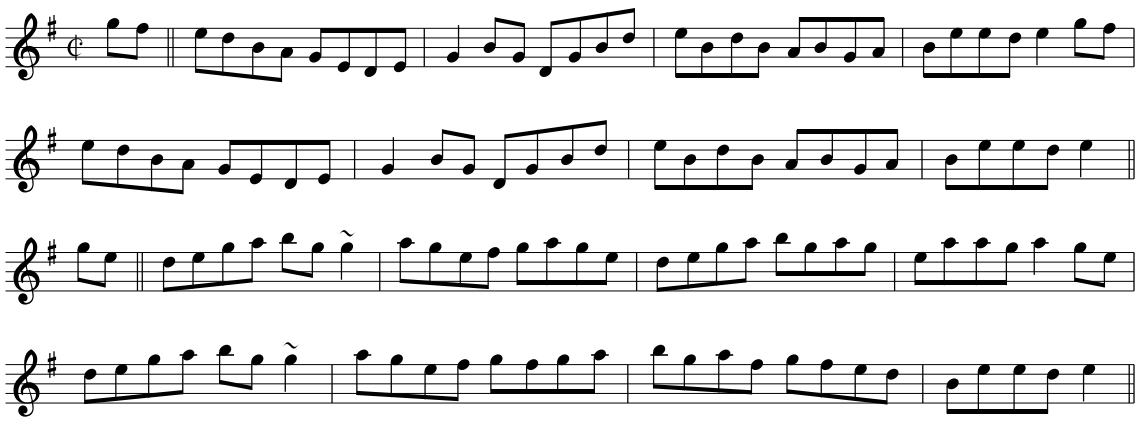
Shaskeen Reel



Lady Ann Montgomery

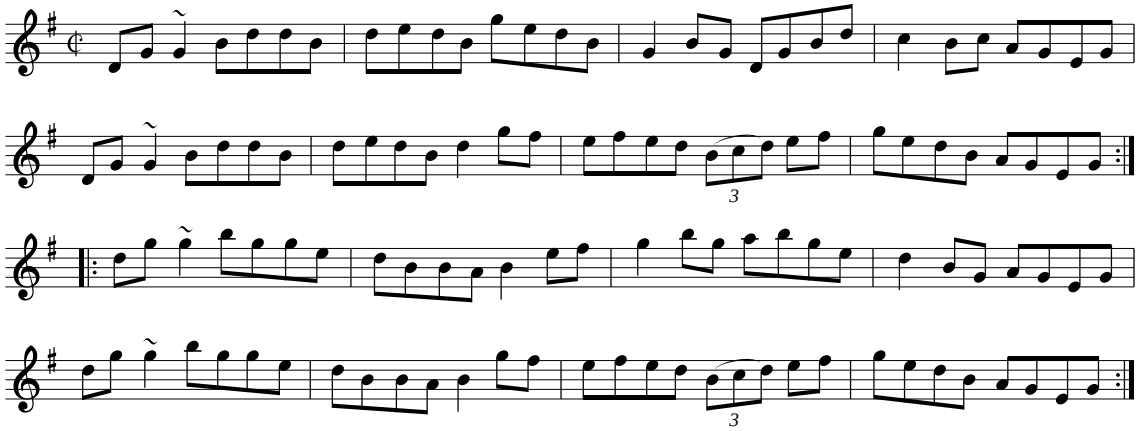


Maude Millar

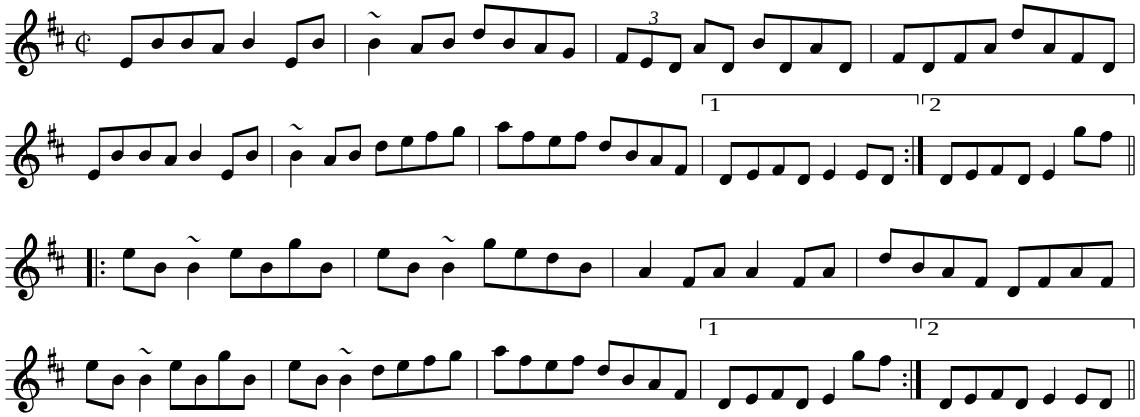


Tim Moloneys, Cooley's, Father Kelly's

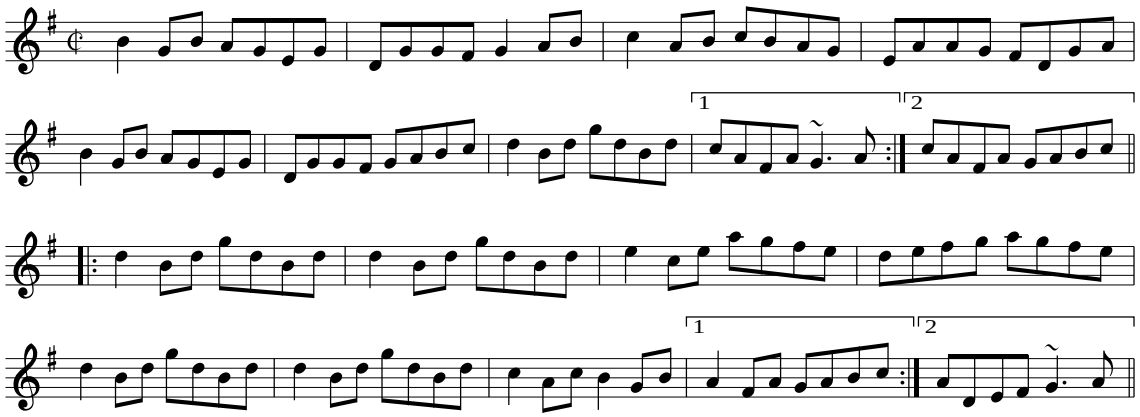
Tim Moloney's



Cooley's

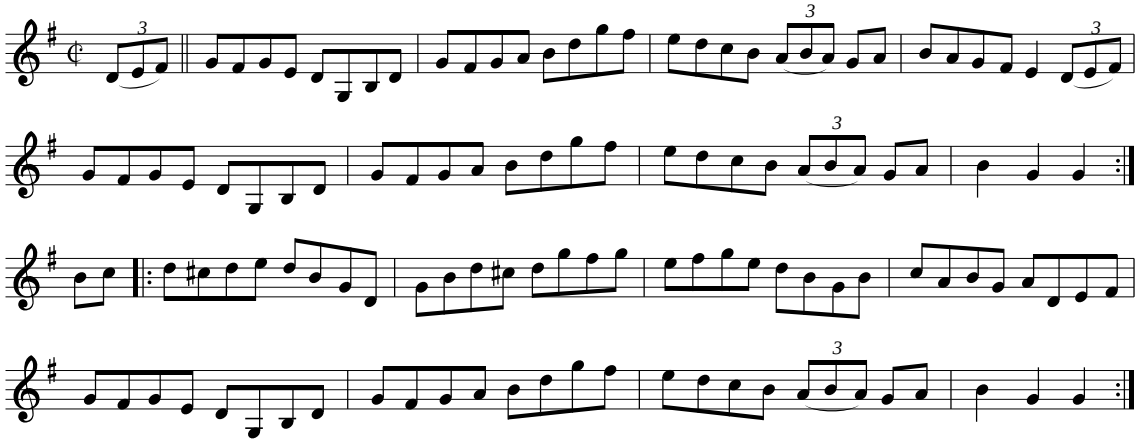


Father Kelly's

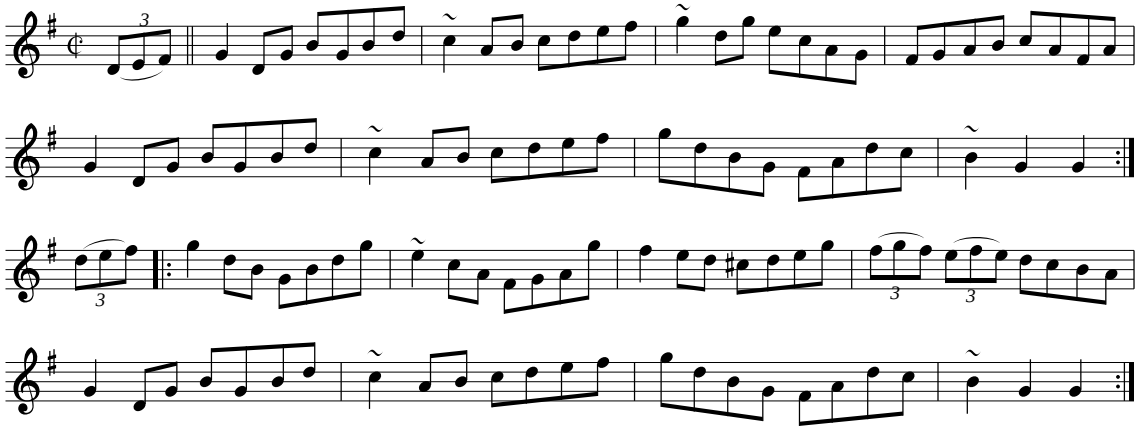


Ballinakill & The Friendly Visit

Ballinakill

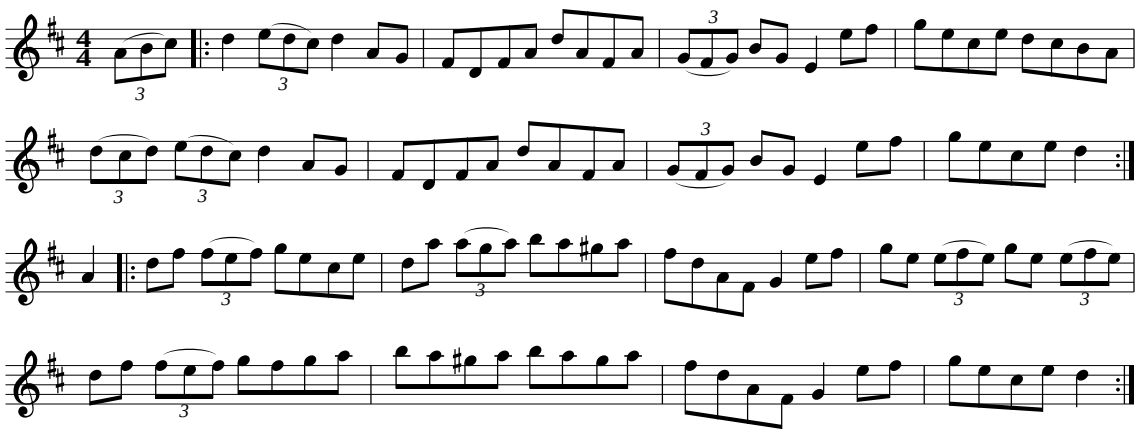


The Friendly Visit

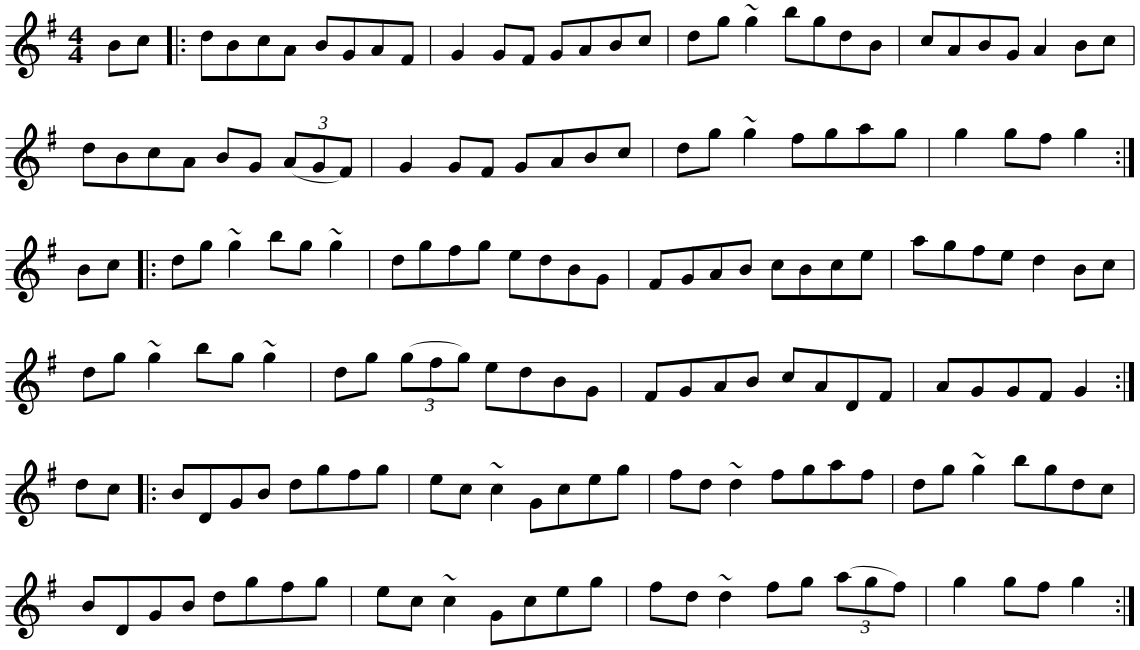


Fairy Queen Hornpipe Set

The Fairy Queen

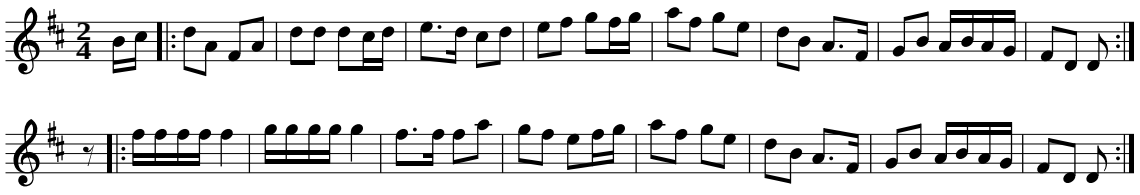


The Wonder Hornpipe

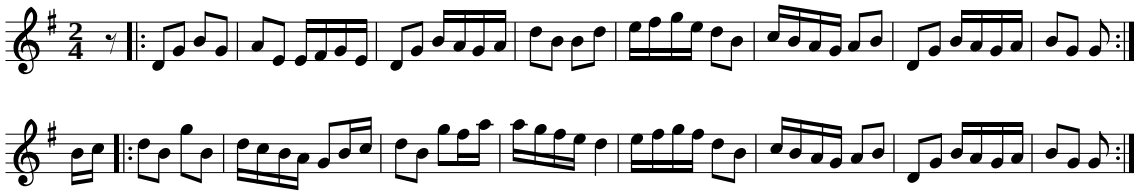


Tell Her I Am, Farewell to Whiskey, Lakes of Sligo, Dennis Murphy's, St. Mary's

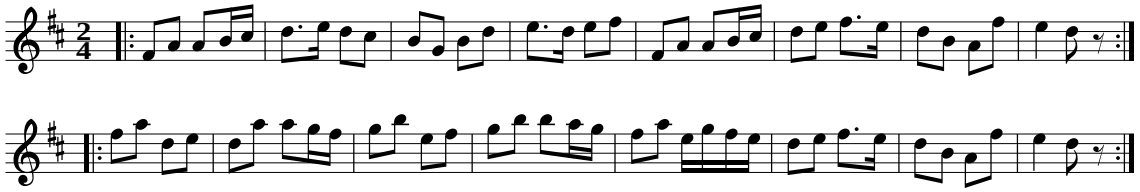
Tell Her I Am (aka Half Door)



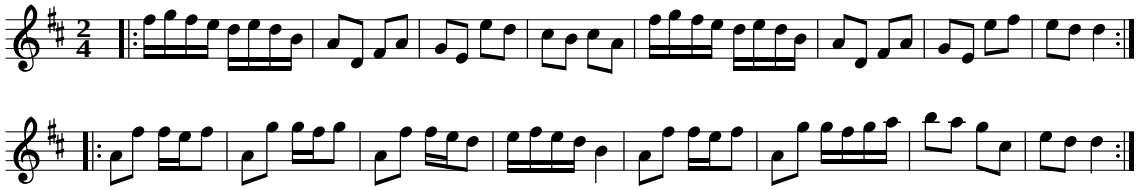
Farewell To Whiskey



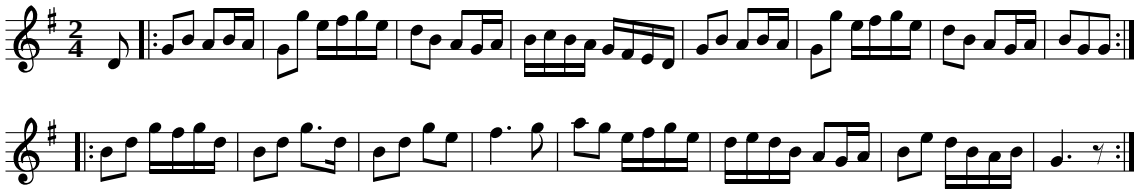
Lakes of Sligo



Dennis Murphy's



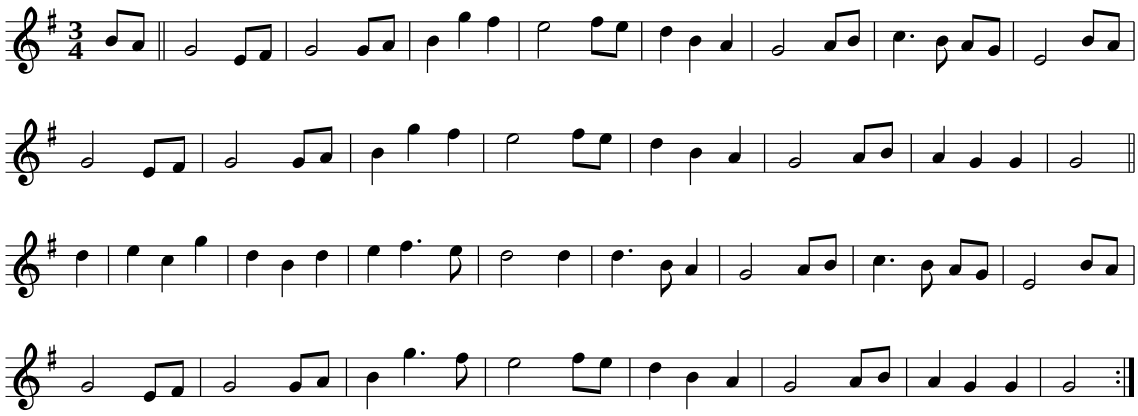
St. Mary's



Eddie and Tom used this set as a polka medley, each tune played once.
This set was also used in the "Siege of Ennis" dance with each tune play twice.

Eamonn an Chnoic

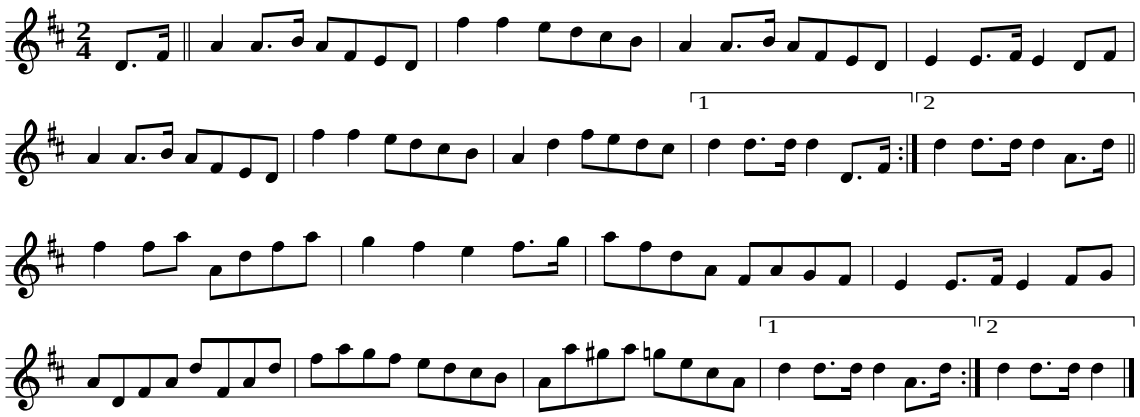
(Ned of the Hill)



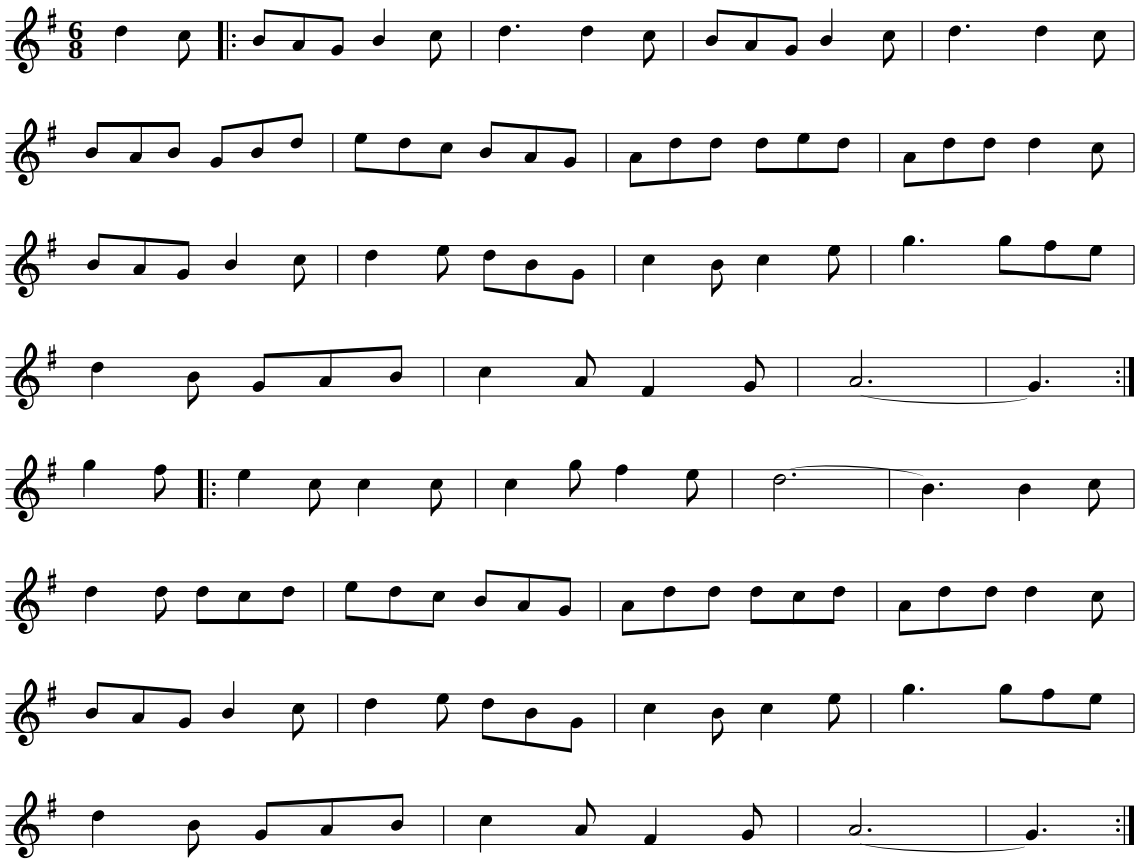
This is one of Eddie’s favorite solos (played very reverently).
Thanks to Bill Mayer for providing this.

Centenary & Parnell’s March

Centenary March



Parnell’s March



Eddie liked to open up his gigs with this set. It’s powerful and a good "ear catcher".