Session Tunes

Collected and Written by John Walsh

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2/4/94

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This file contains a number of well-known Irish jigs, reels, hornpipes, and polkas, written out in Chris Walshaw's abc notation. To print them out, first process the file with the program abc2mtex, which will convert it to a Music TeX file, and then run that file through Music TeX. See the abc2mtex documentation for an explanation of the notation. Both abc2mtex and Music TeX are available for anonymous ftp on the archive celtic.stanford.edu.

Like any folk music, these tunes change with time. There may be quite different versions of some of them floating around. I have tried to give settings which are close to what I hear played. A few tunes are transcribed from particular performances, one or two others are taken from books–both of these are indicated on the tune notes–but the majority are set about as I have heard them played.

Quite a lot is left to the player. The settings are basic: the only decorations indicated explicitly are rolls, triplets and quadruplets; first and second endings are only written out when they are substantially different. Apart from the fact that most players don't need to be told when and where to put in a grace note, a lot of gracings are done differently on different instruments: carefully-written-out fiddle decorations can be a distraction to someone playing the tune on a flute. Since the decorations are only indicated generically, not in detail, the tunes should be playable on any of the usual instruments. (Well..I have only checked them out on the whistle and pipes.) If some of the details of the settings turn out to be awkward on a particular instrument, just adapt the tune to fit–most players automatically modify a tune slightly in order to make it fit the fingers, or to take advantage of some particular effect on their instrument. (There are a couple of obvious cases, where, for instance, the range is beyond the range of the pipes, whistle, and flute. It is up to the individual to modify the setting–i.e. to fake it–if they want to play it.)

One thing bears noting: I have written the hornpipes out in straight eighth notes, but they are usually played with alternating dotted and cut notes: i.e. what I have written as "eighth, eighth, eighth, eighth" is often played more like "dotted eighth, sixteenth, dotted eighth, sixteenth." The amount of emphasis is a matter of style, so some books write out the dotted notes, others don't. I opted for the easiest path, and wrote them out in straight eighths.

Thanks to Dan Beimborn and Seamus Keleher for suggesting many of these tunes. (Cryptic notations such as Z:Boston just indicate that the tune is commonly played in sessions there. But in fact, most of these tunes will be played in sessions all over.)

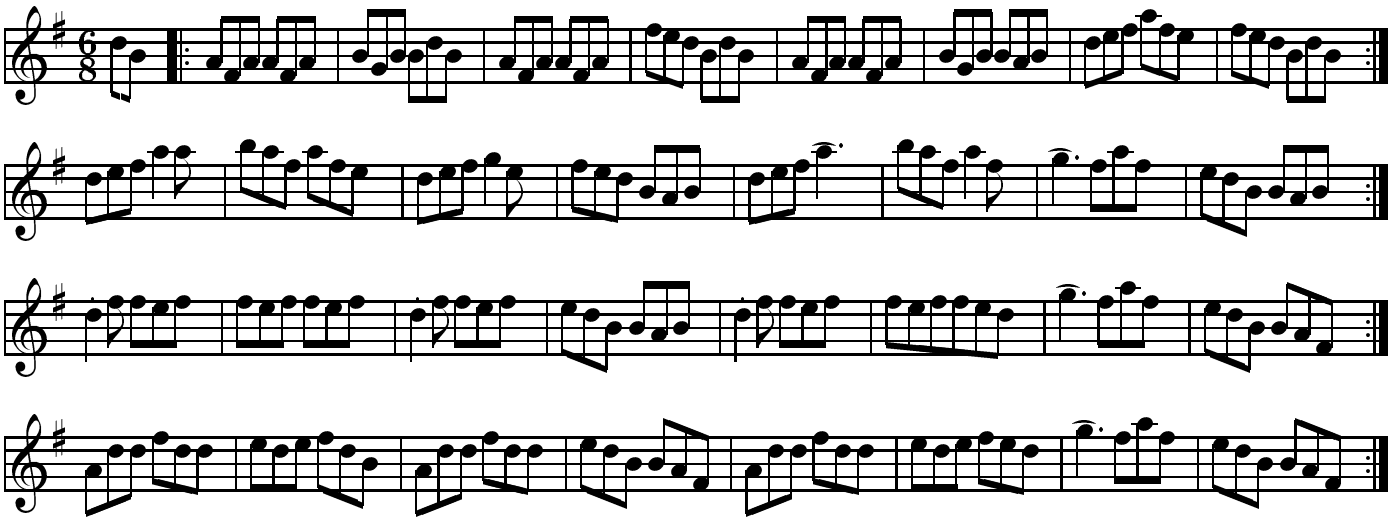
I make apologies in advance for the typos which have surely escaped my proof-reading. Please let me know about any obvious errors, or any settings which seem too much at variance with what is played in your own area.

When I knew the composer of a tune, I indicated it, but I only knew the composers of a couple of the tunes. If any others have known composers, I would appreciate hearing about it. As far as I know, the remainder of the tunes are public domain. The copyright below does not cover the tunes themselves, just the arrangements and the code in this file.

Tune 35 is from Bulmer and Sharpley' book; tune 15 from Ceol Rince na hEireann, tune 49 from Leo Rowsome's tutor, tune 4 from O'Neill's. The remainder of this file is copyright by John B. Walsh, January, 1994. It may be freely used, copied and distributed, as long as this notice is included with the copy. It may not be sold, or used to make hard copies for sale, without express permission of the author.

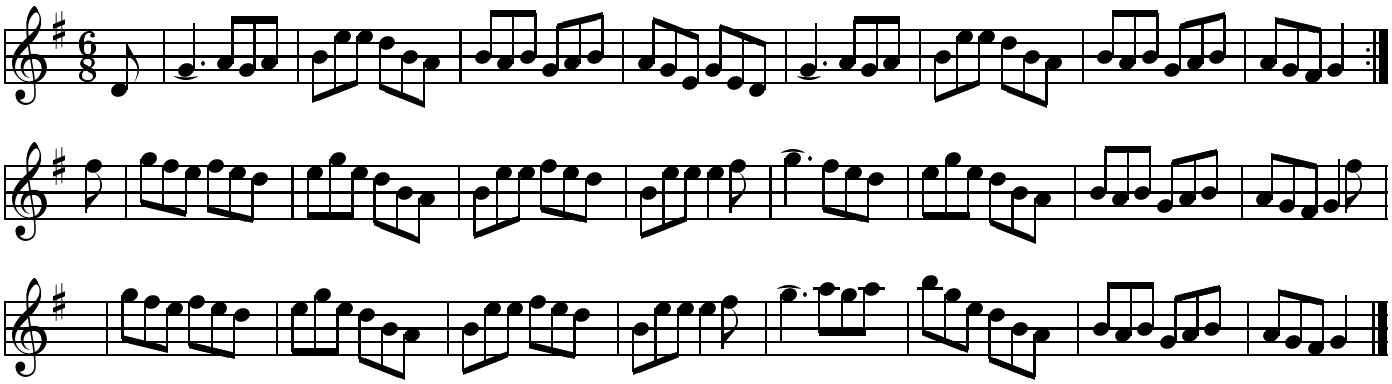
Double Jigs

1. The Lark in the Morning

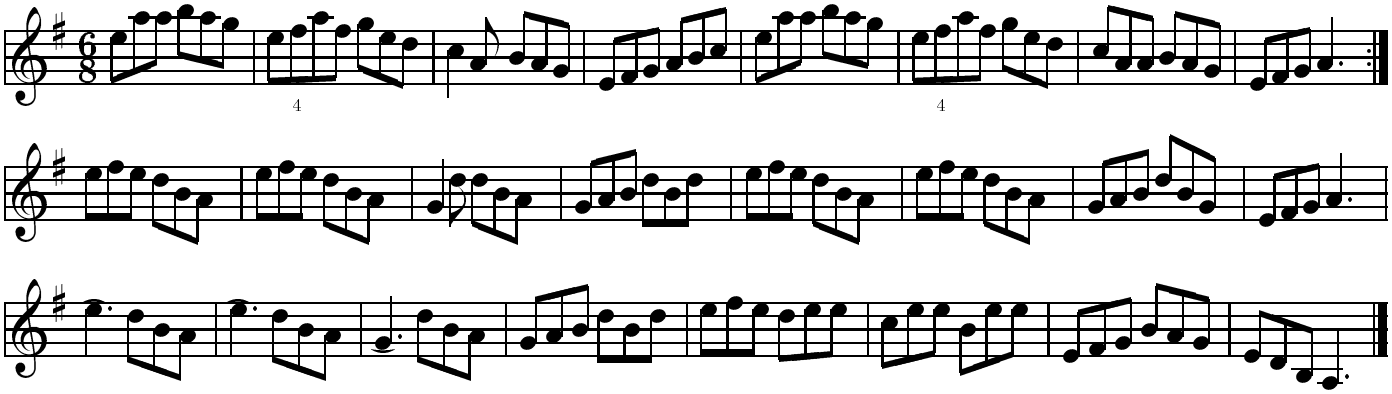


2. Donnybrook Fair

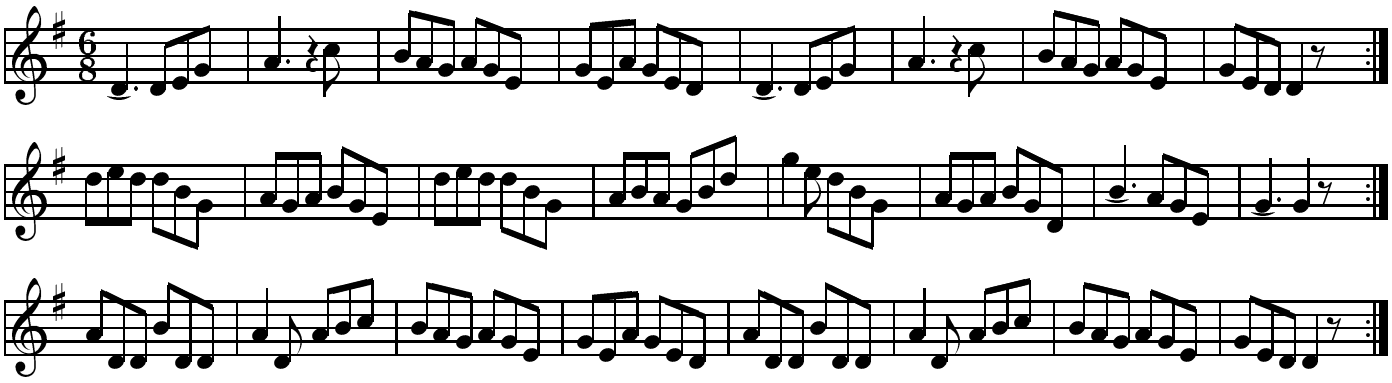
(The Joy of My Life)



3. The Cliffs of Moher

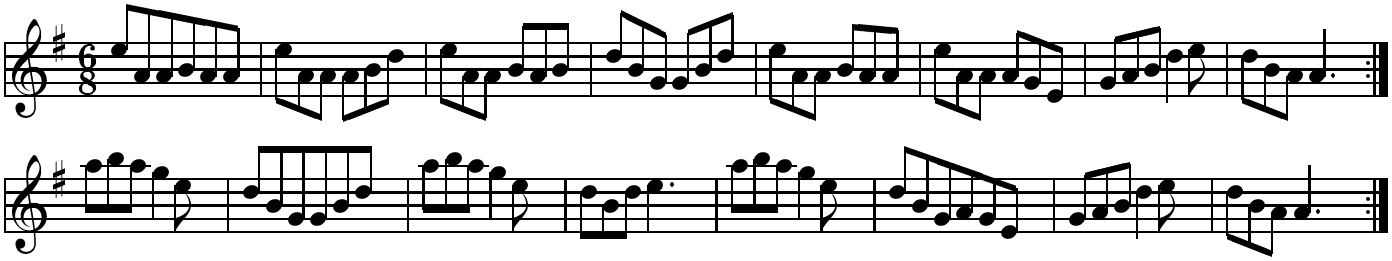


4. The Blarney Pilgrim

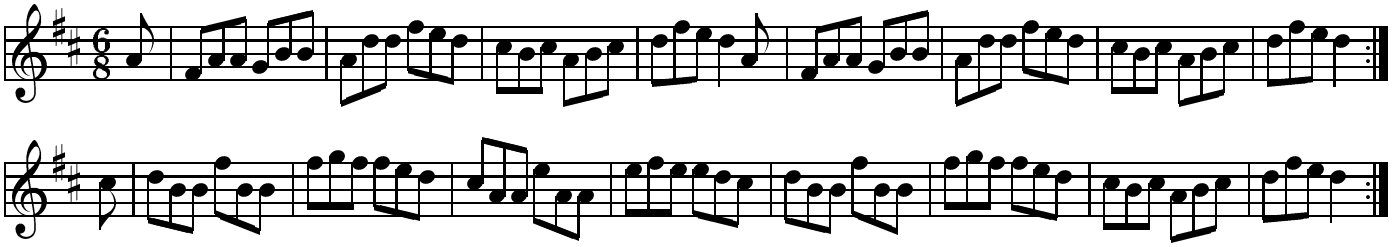


5. Scatter the Mud

(The Maid of Tramore)

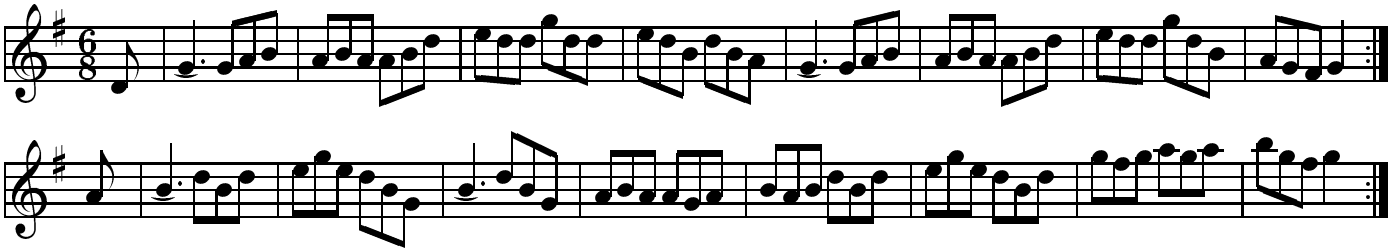


6. Tripping Up the Stairs



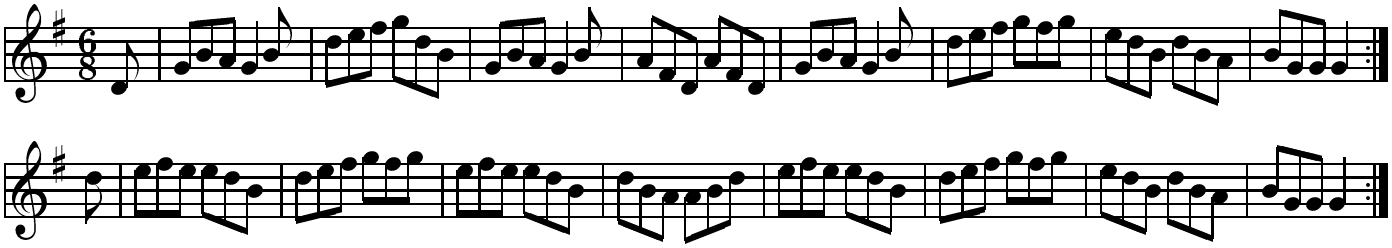
7. The Kesh Jig

(Kerrigan's Jig)

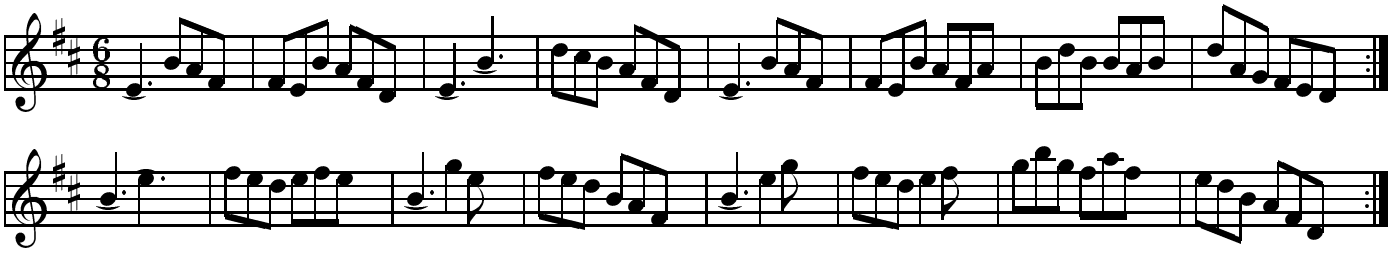


8. Saddle the Pony

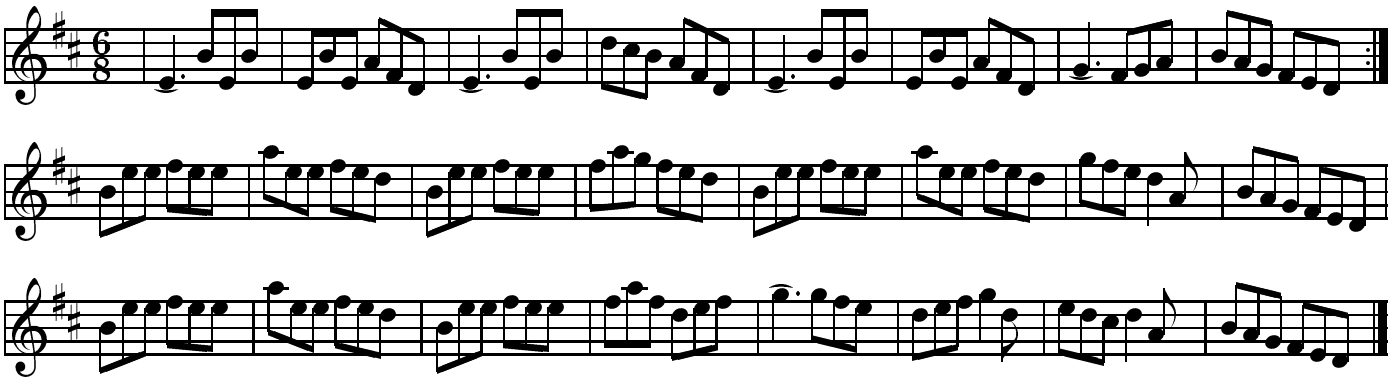
(The Priests Leap)



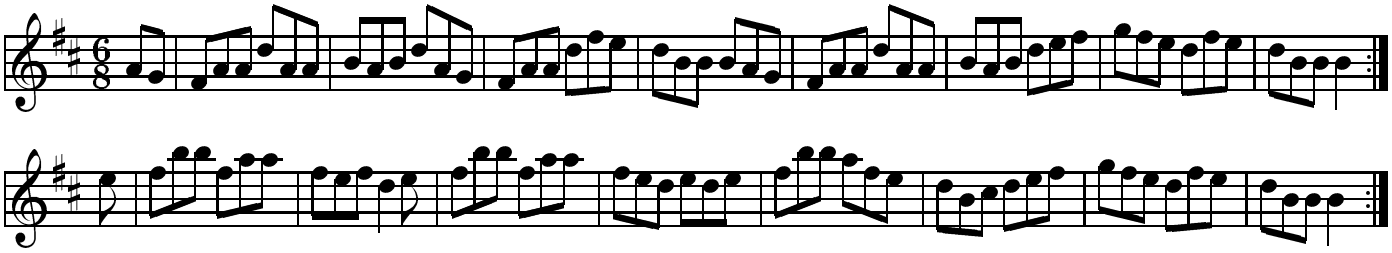
9. Whelan's Fancy



10. Morrison's

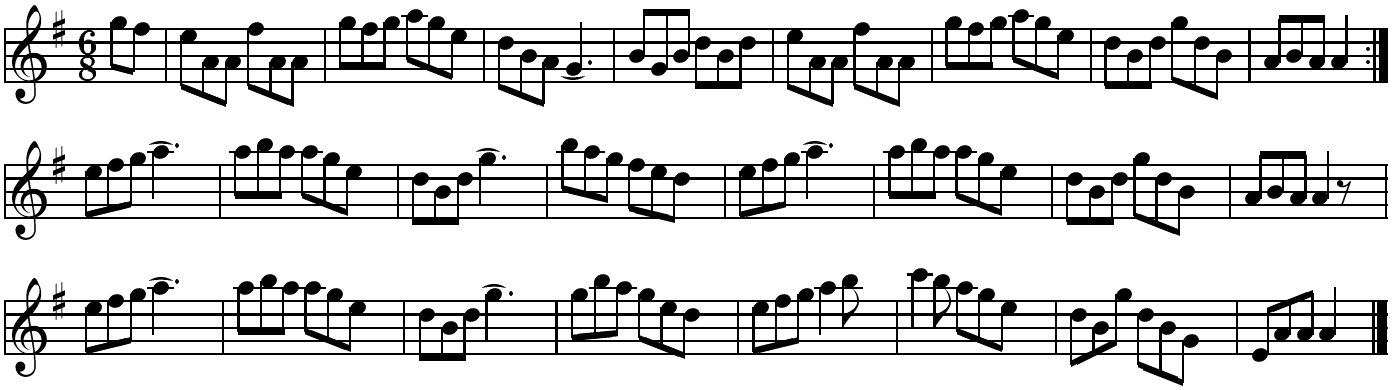


11. The Connaughtman's Rambles

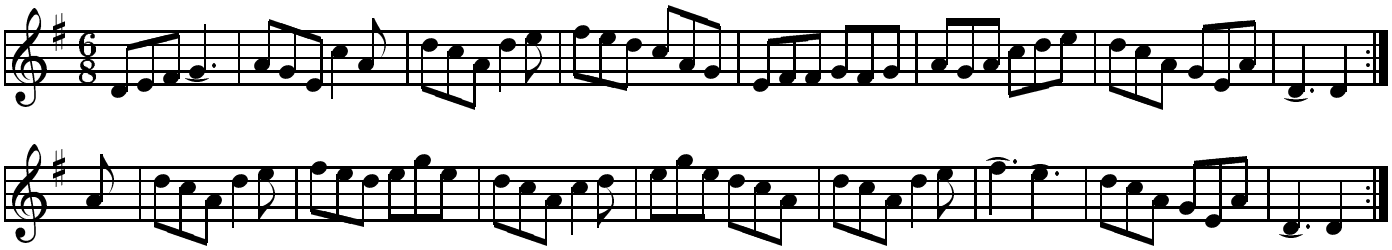


12. The Clare Jig

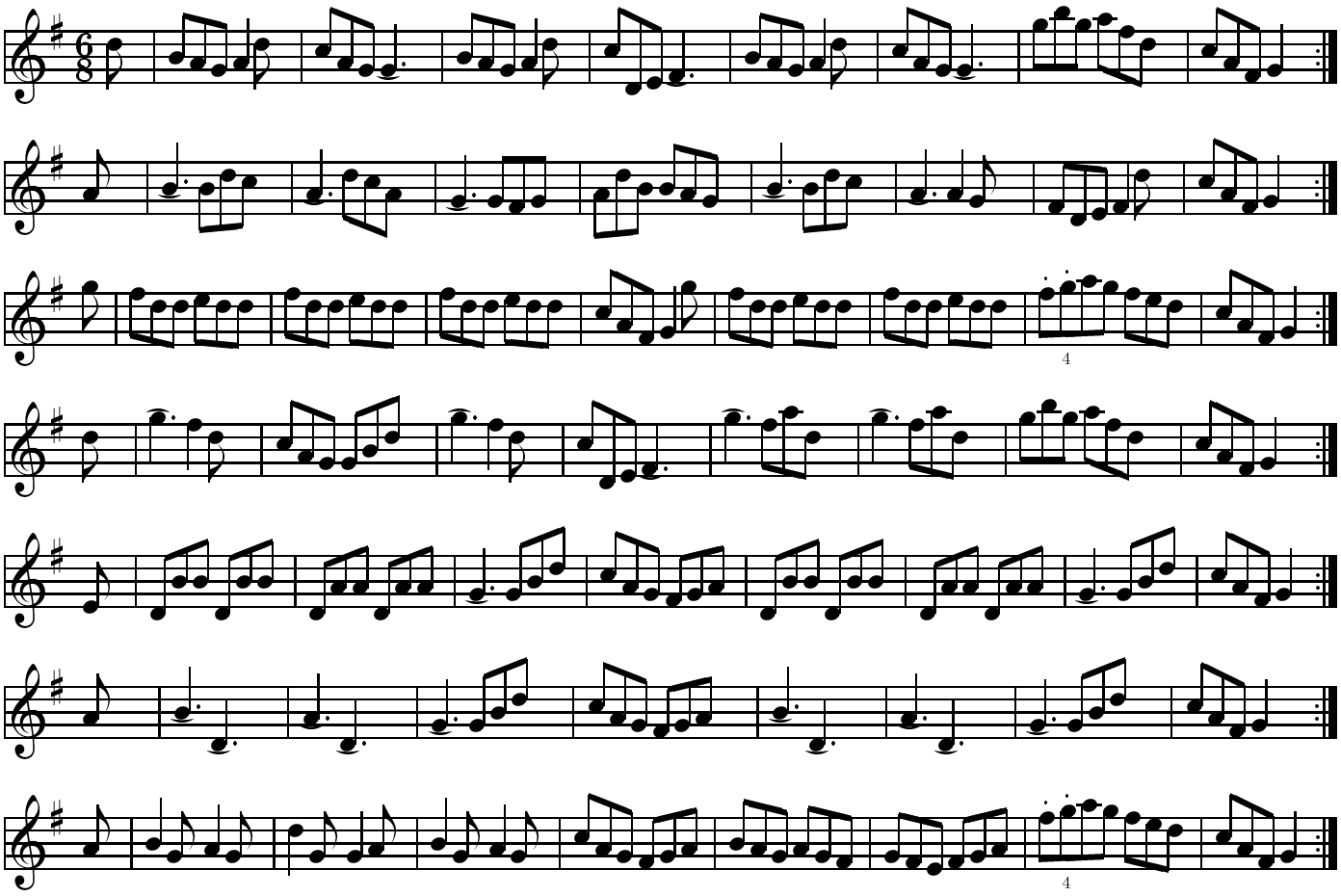
(The Mug of Brown Ale)



13. Garrett Barry's

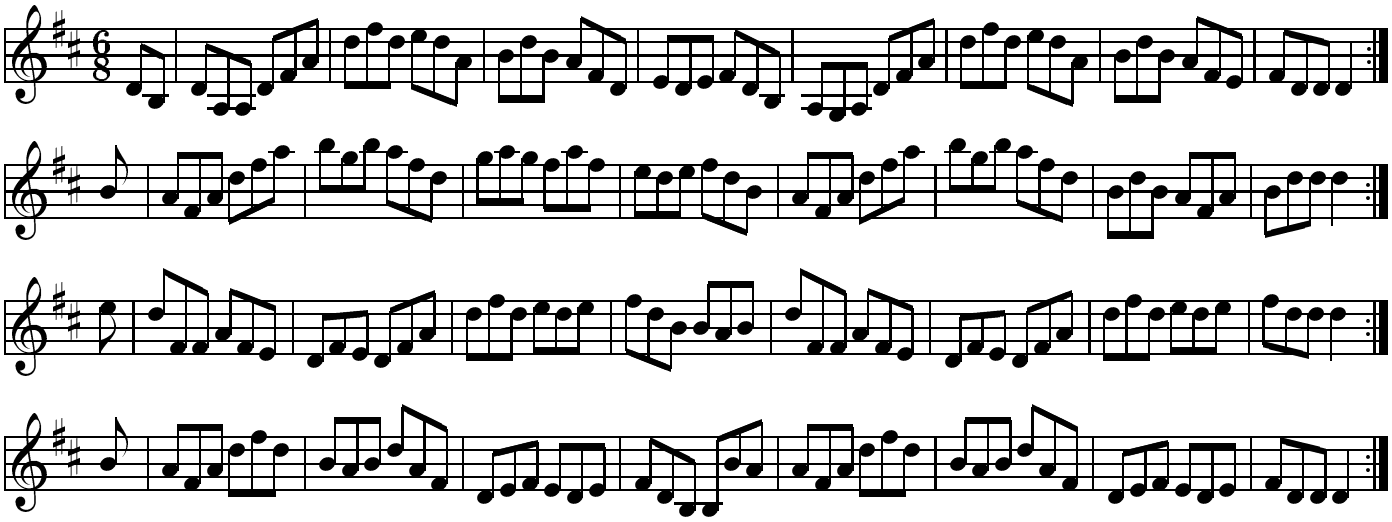


14. The Gold Ring



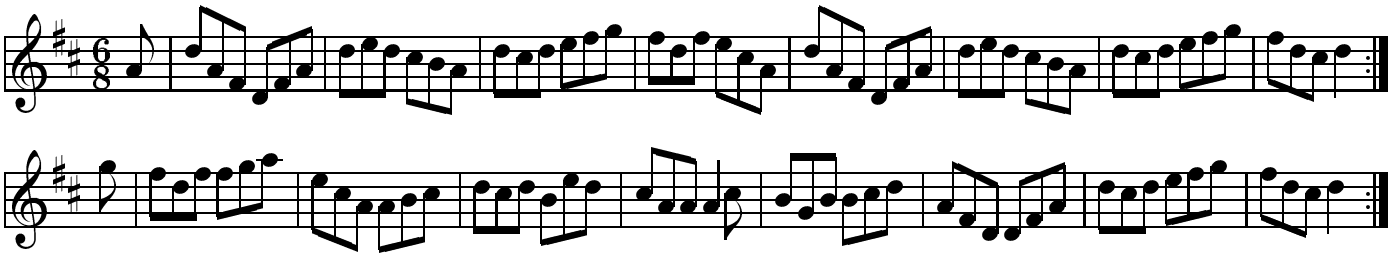
15. Fainne Oir Ort

(The Gold Ring)

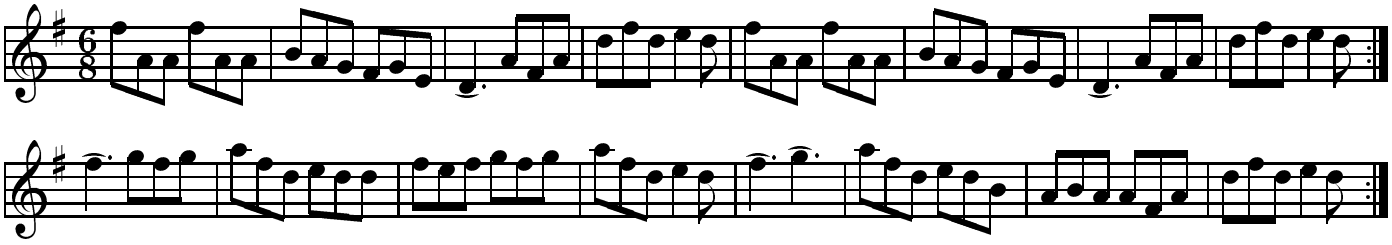


16. The Top of the Cork Road

(Father O'Flynn)



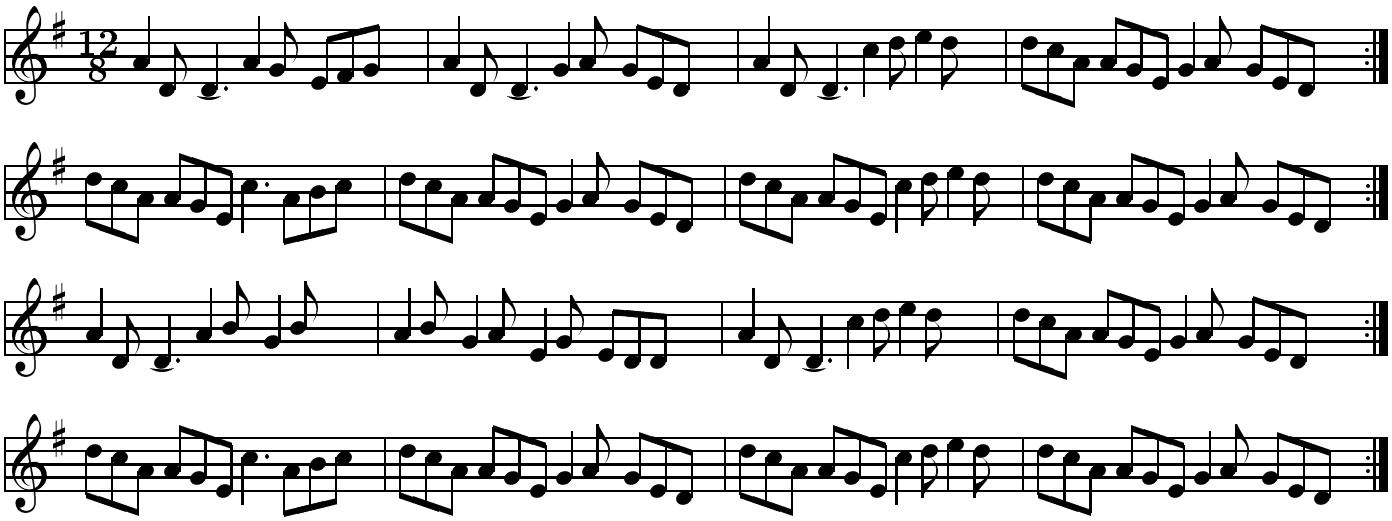
17. Sixpenny Money



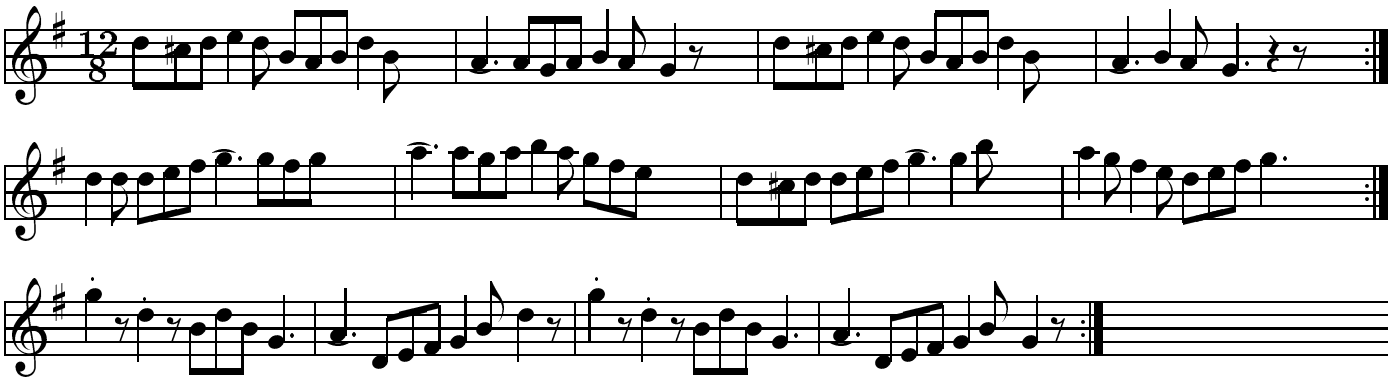
Single Jigs and Slides

18. The Old Hag in the Kiln

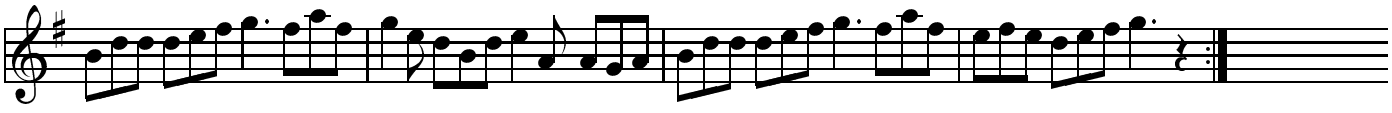
(Dinny Delaney's)



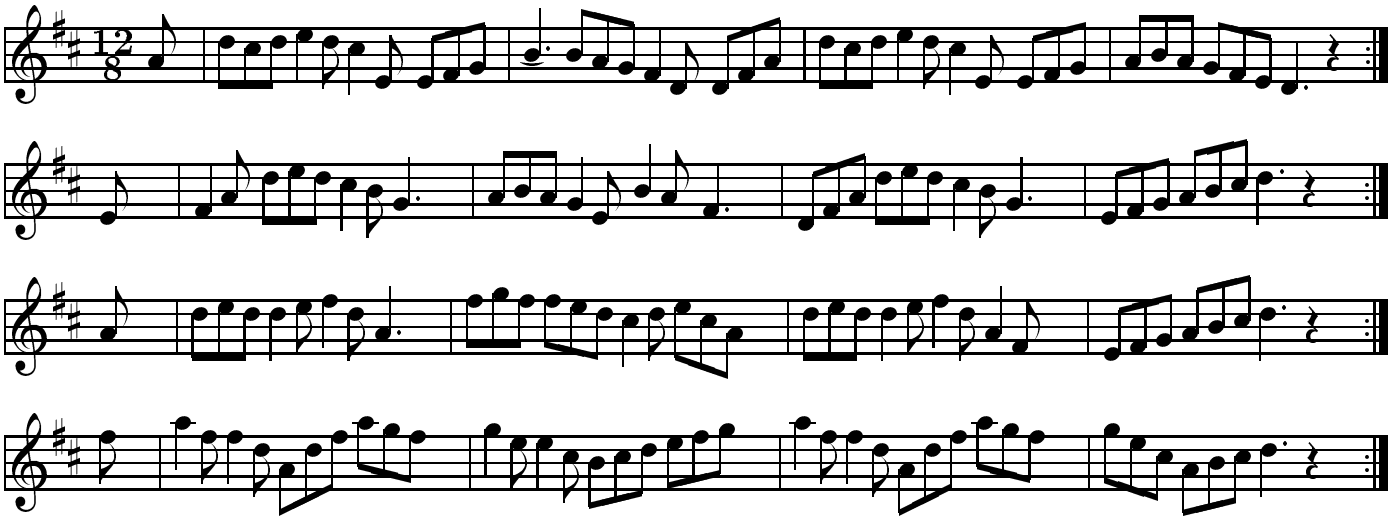
19. The Dingle Regatta



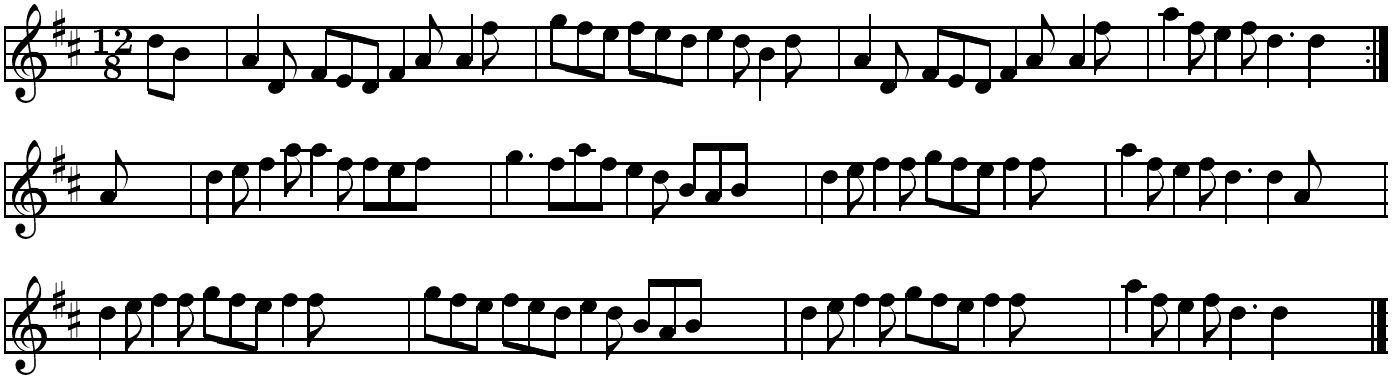
Seamus Ennis doesn't play the third part, and plays the second part as follows.



20. Kathleen Hehir's Slide

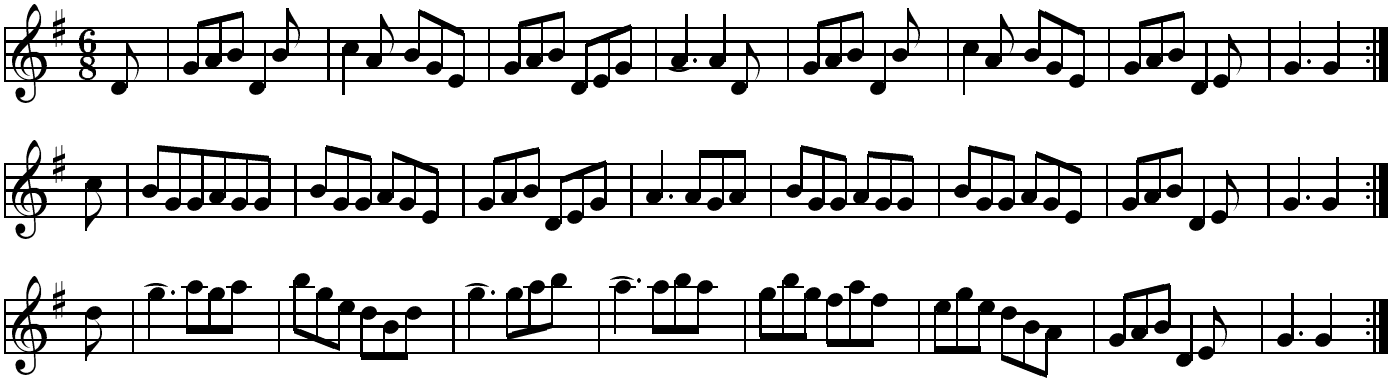


21. Denis Murphy's Slide



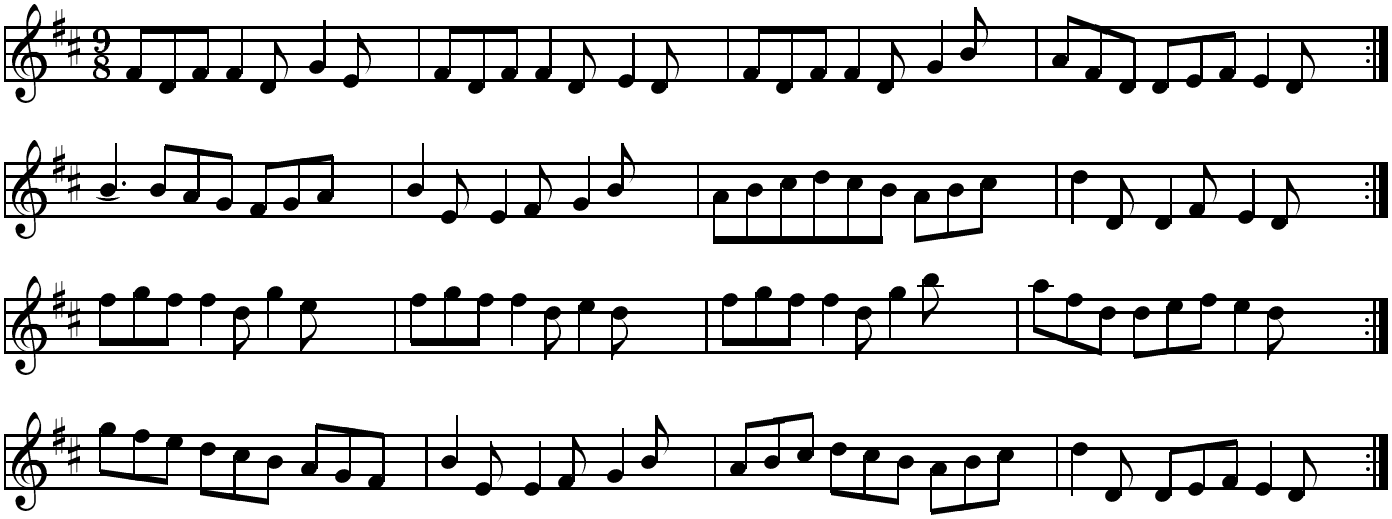
22. Merrily Kiss the Quaker's Wife

(Merrily Dance the Quaker)

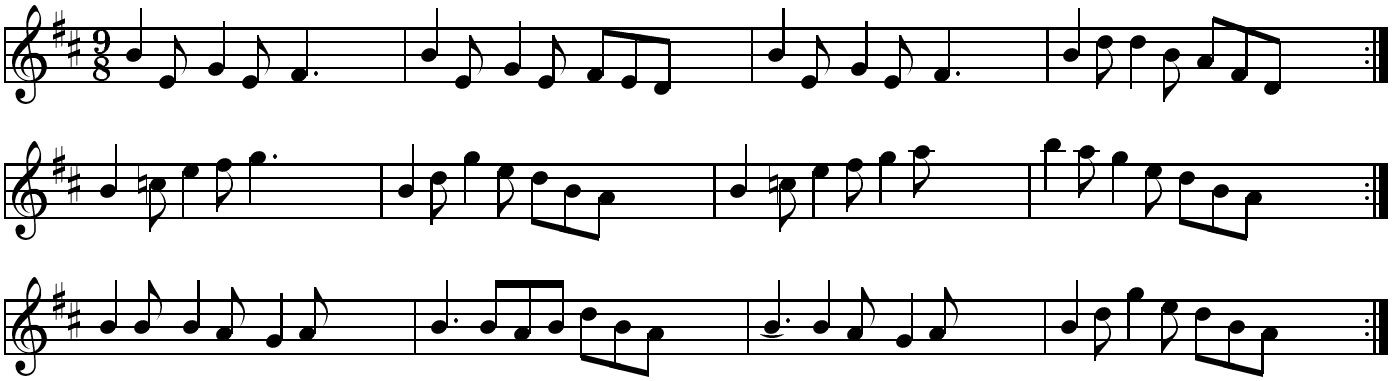


Slip Jigs

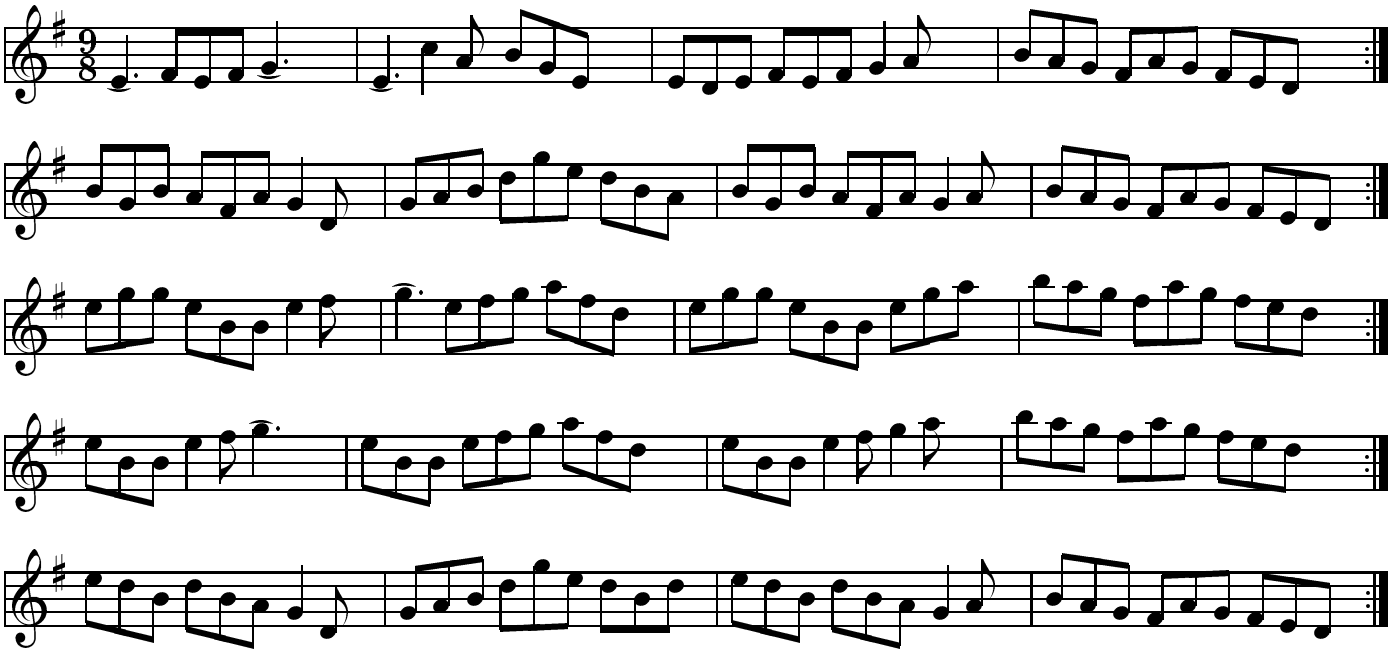
23. The Foxhunter's Jig



24. The Butterfly *John Potts*



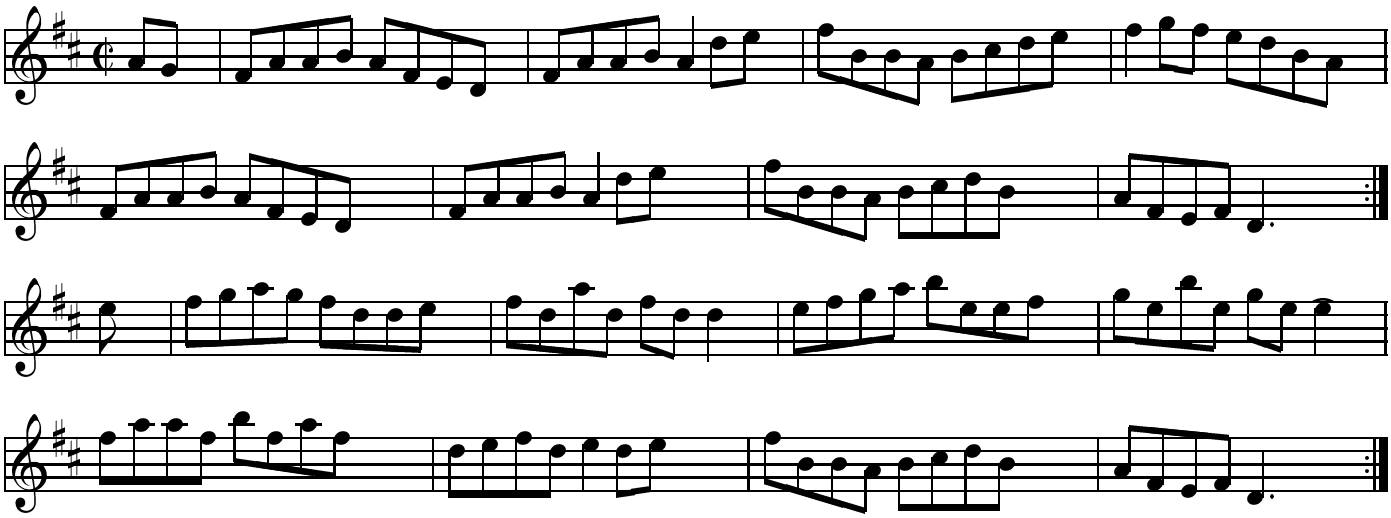
25. The Kid on the Mountain



Reels

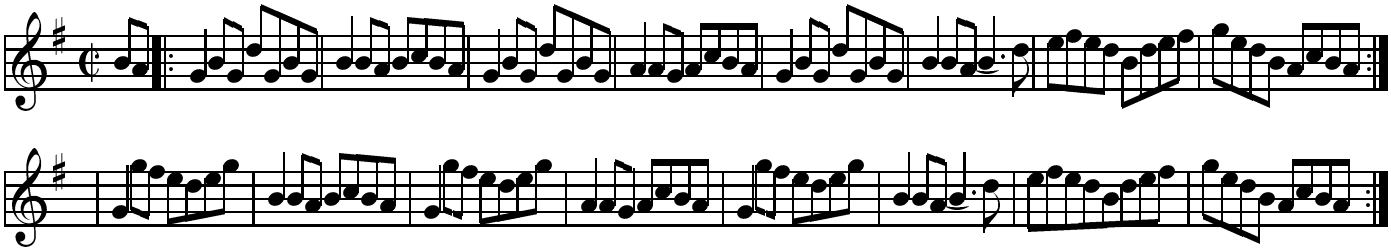
26. The Maid Behind the Bar

(The Green Mountain)

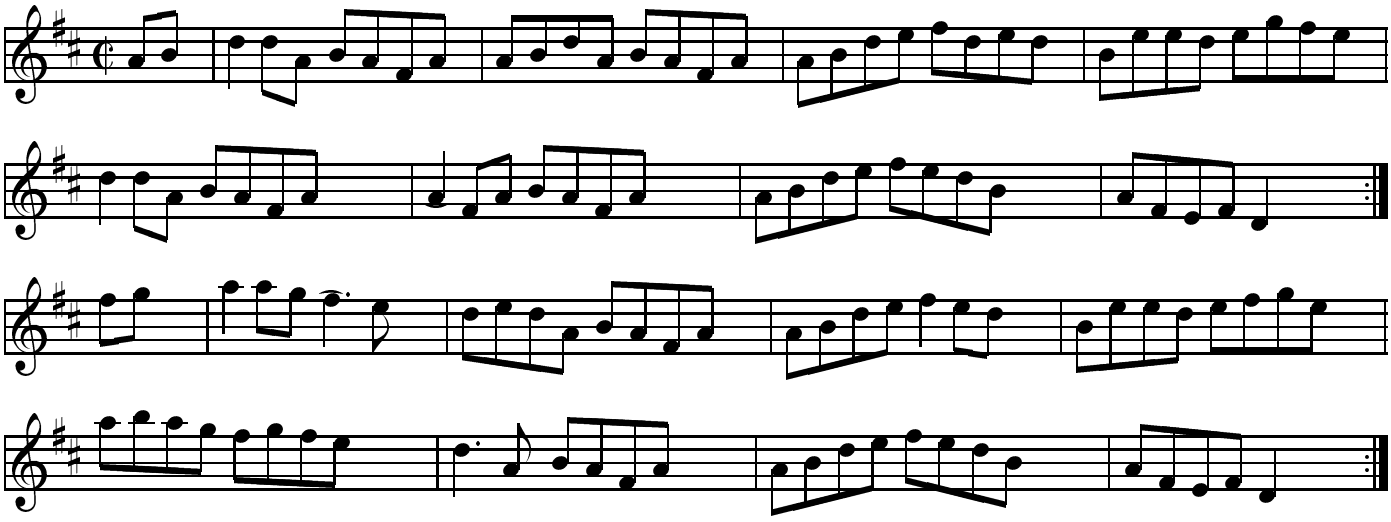


27. Miss McLeod's

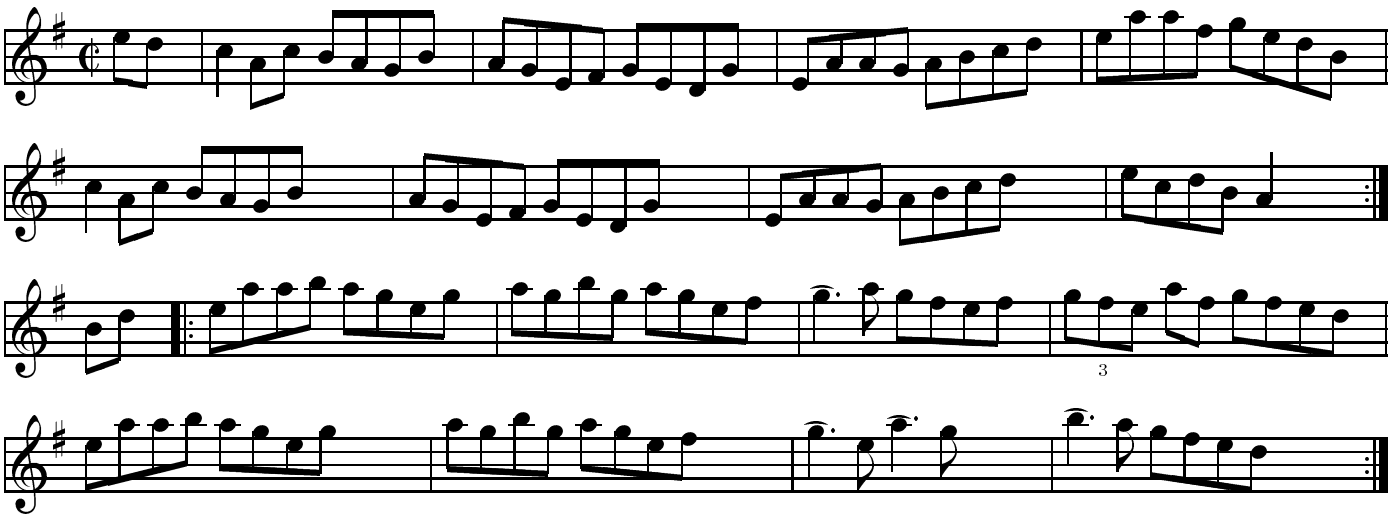
(Mrs. MacLeod of Raasay)



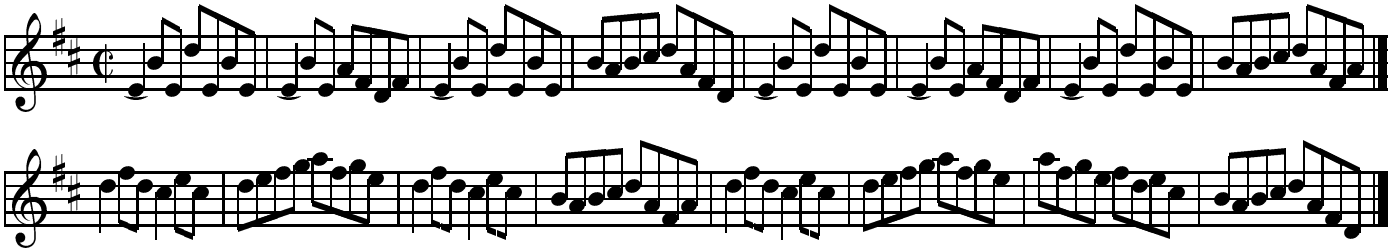
28. The Merry Blacksmith



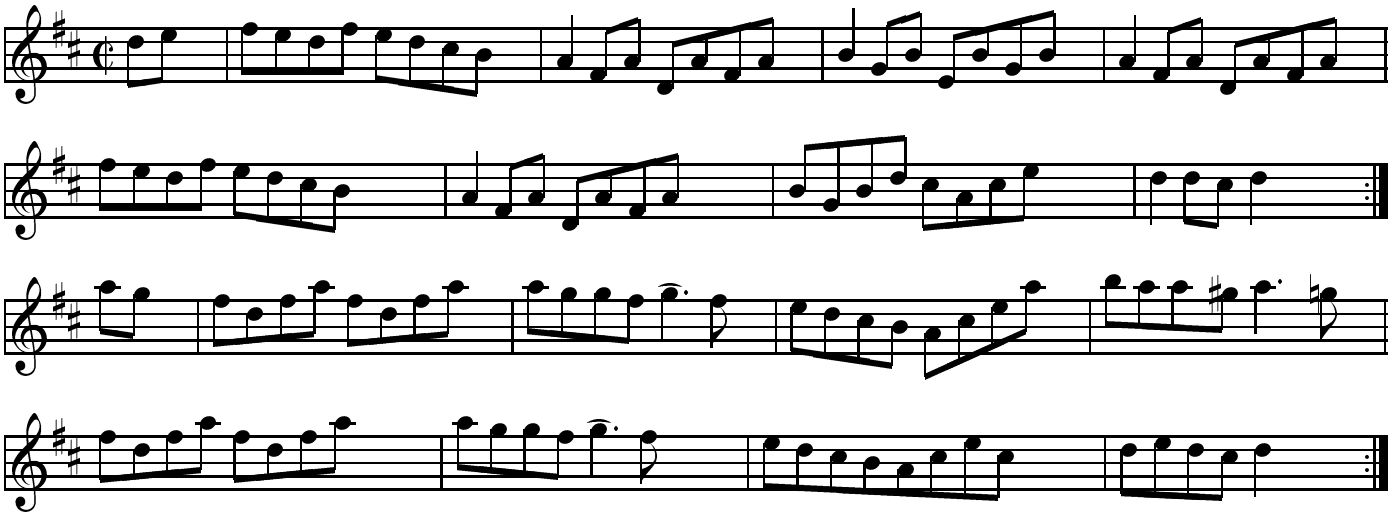
29. The Star of Munster



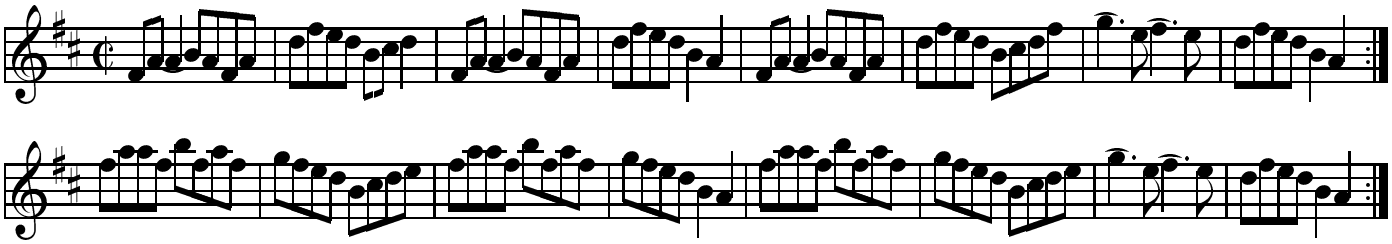
30. Drowsy Maggie



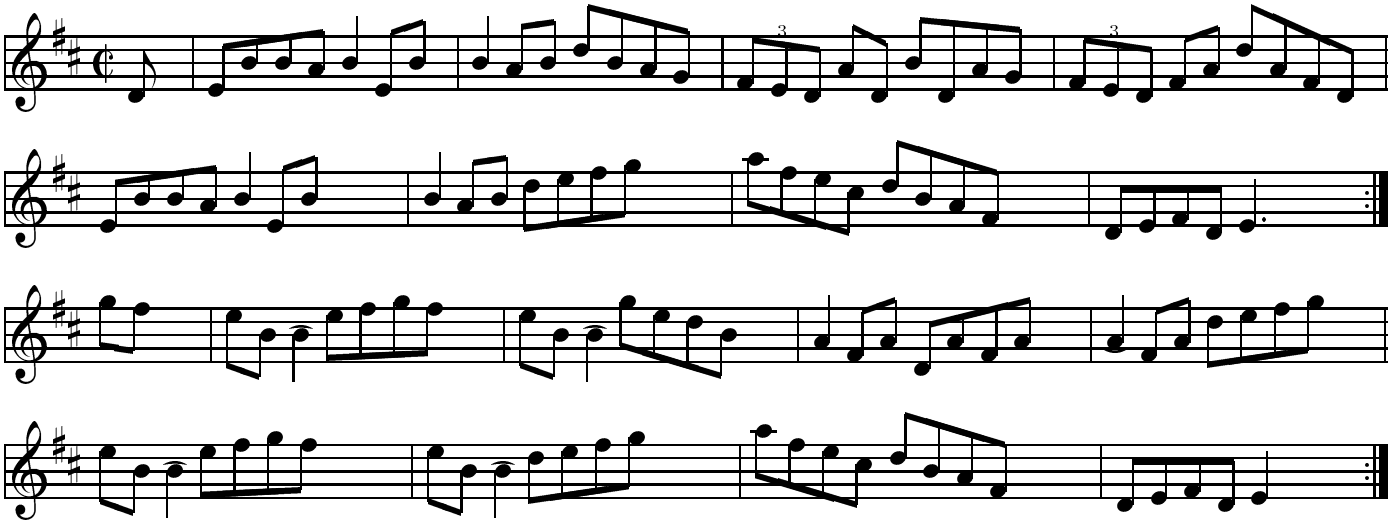
31. Saint Anne's Reel



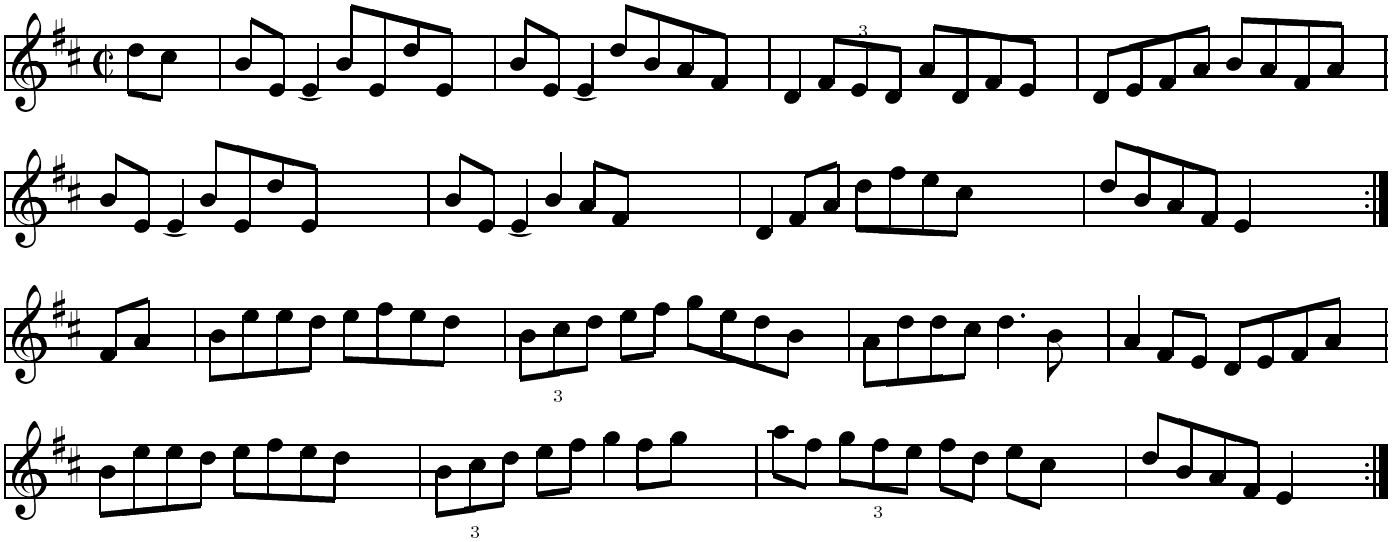
32. The Silver Spear



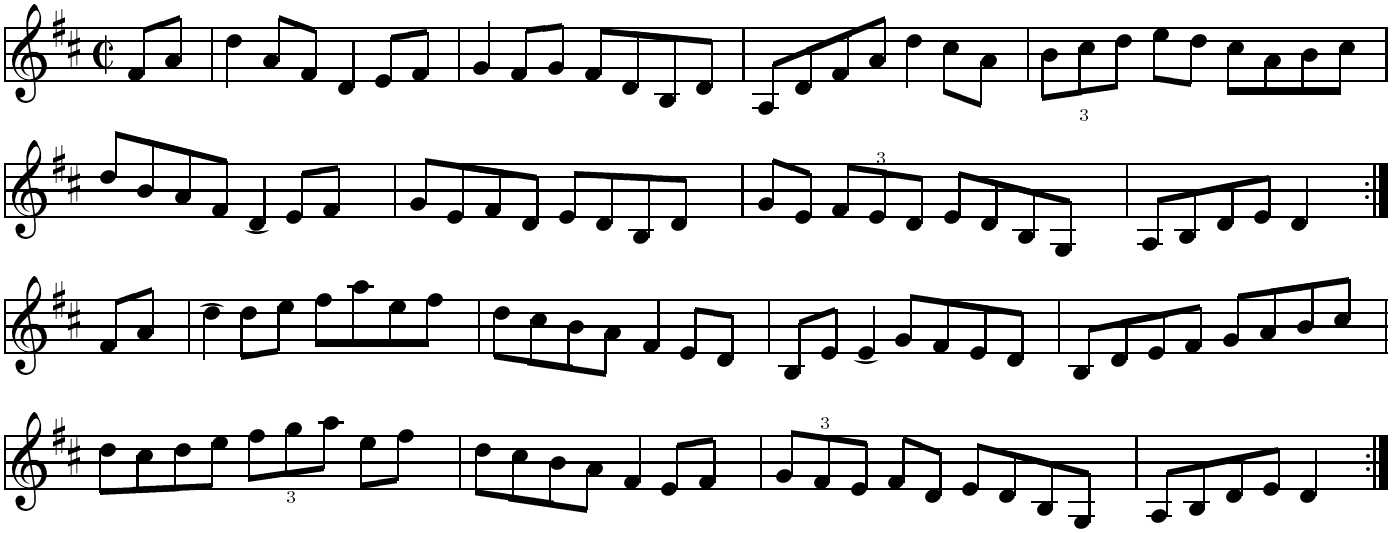
33. Cooley's



34. The Pigeon on the Gate

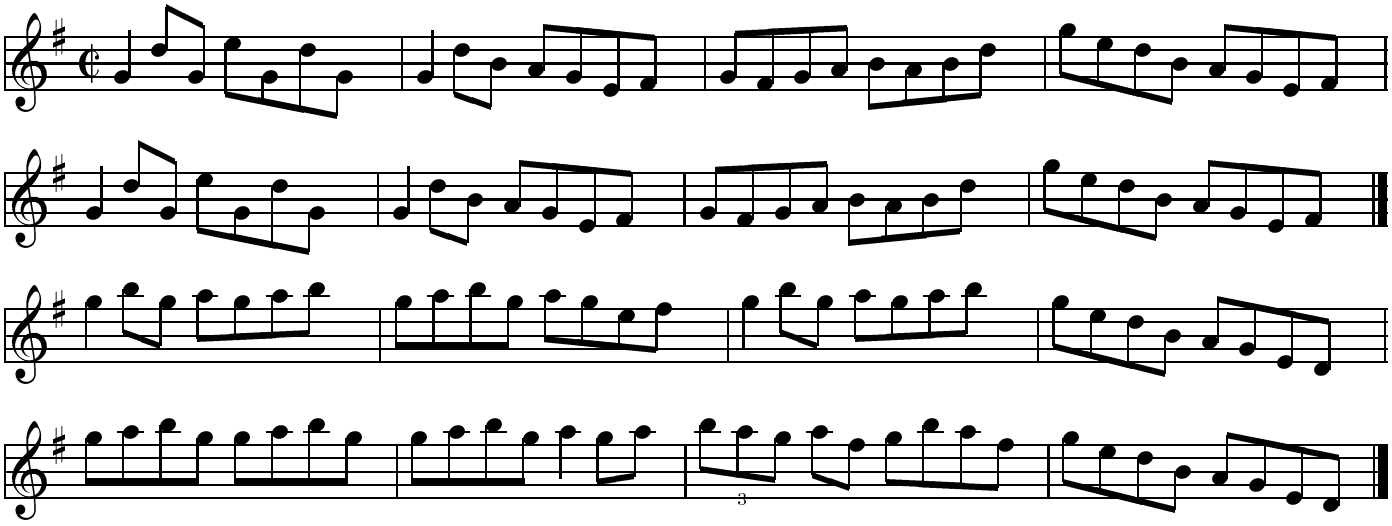


35. Swinging on the Gate

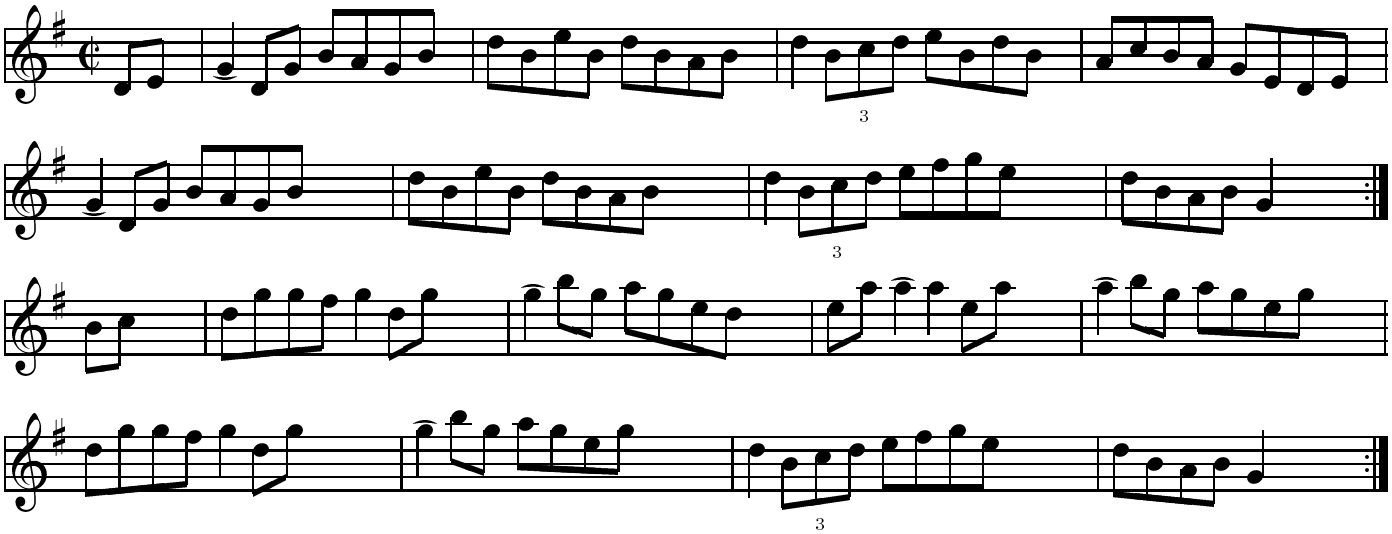


36. The Galway Rambler

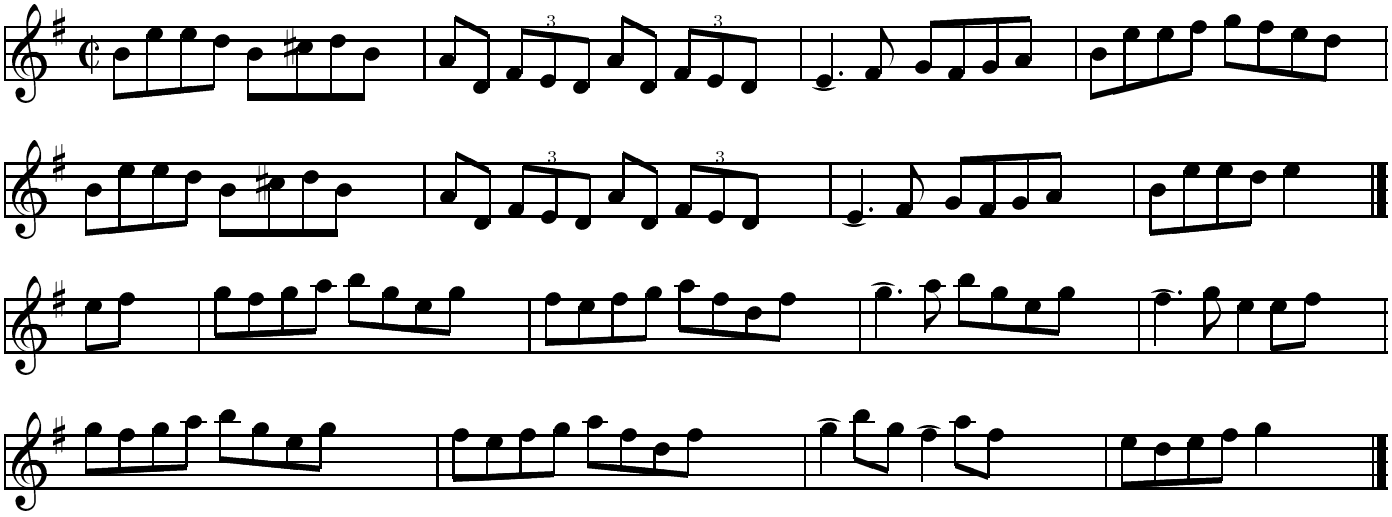
(Walsh's Favorite; Wellington's)



37. The Sally Gardens

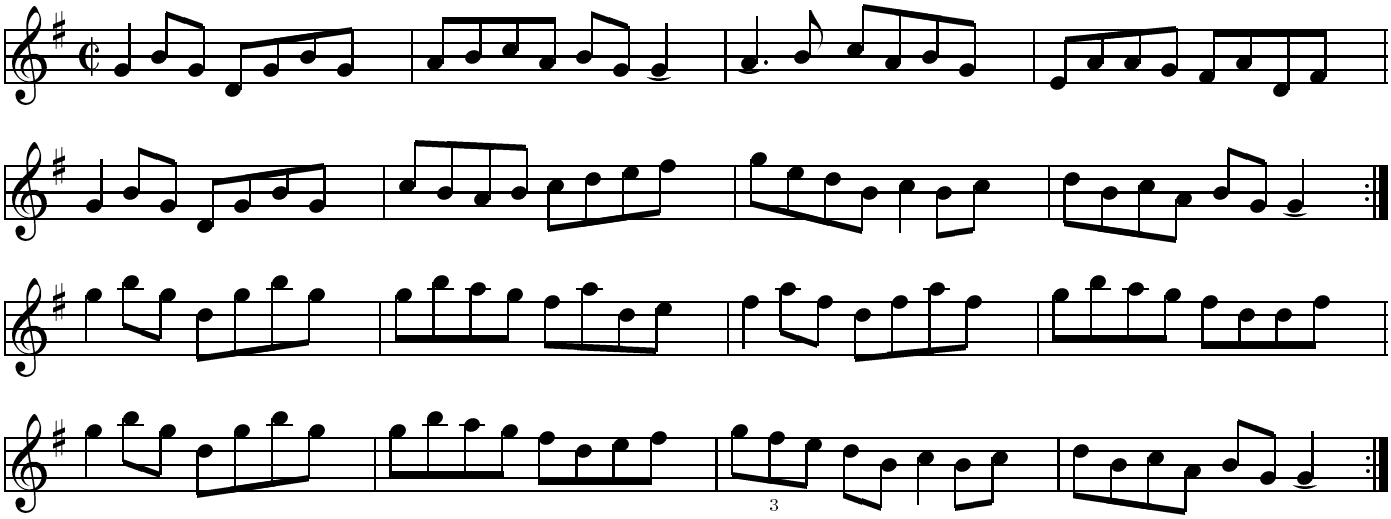


38. Ships Are Sailing

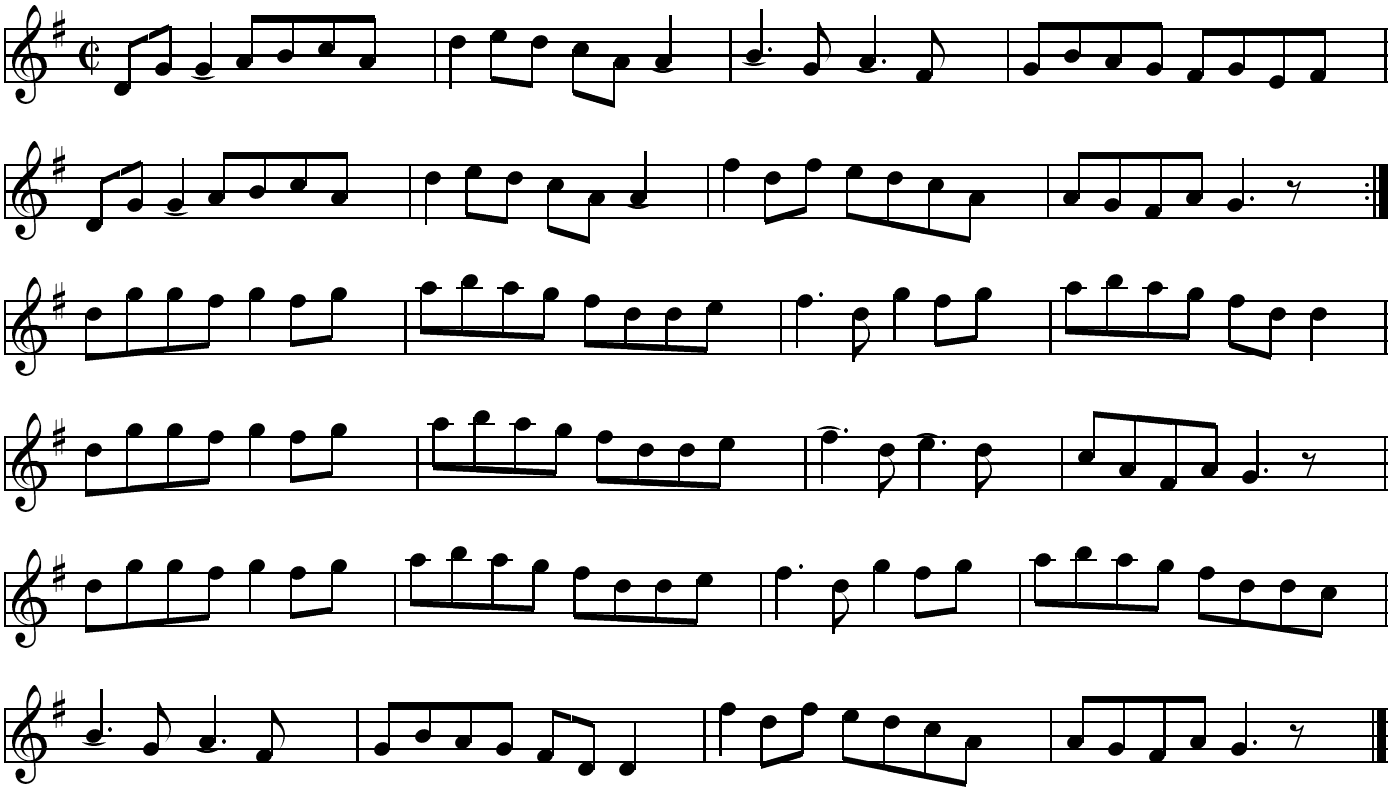


39. Sheehan's

(Wellington's)

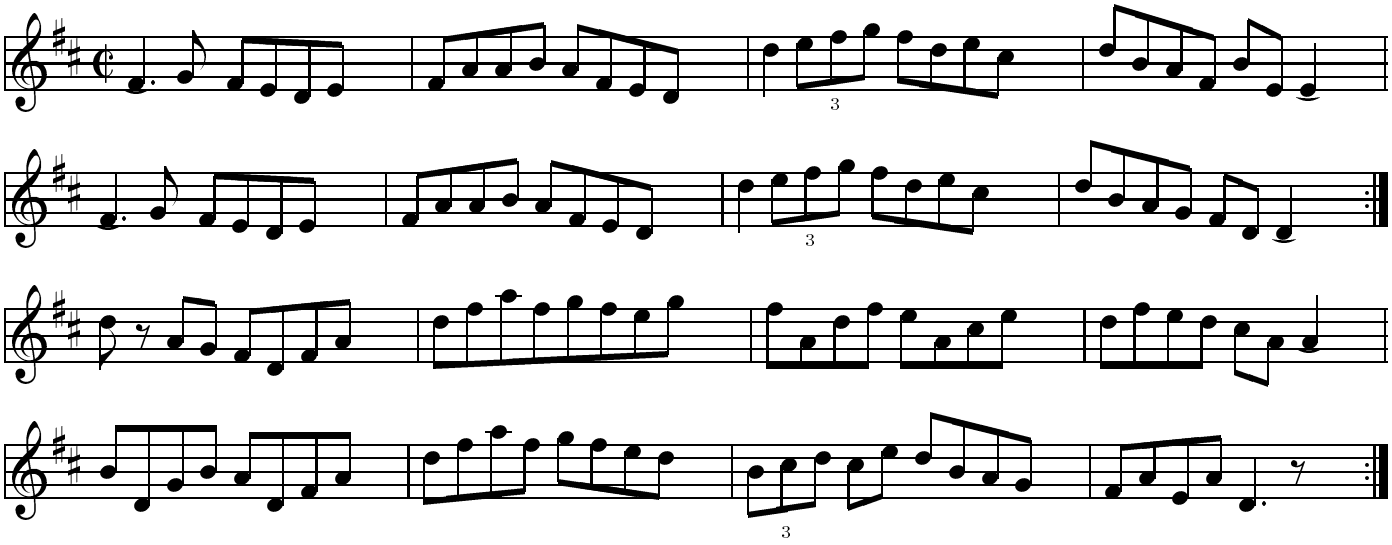


40. The Shaskeen

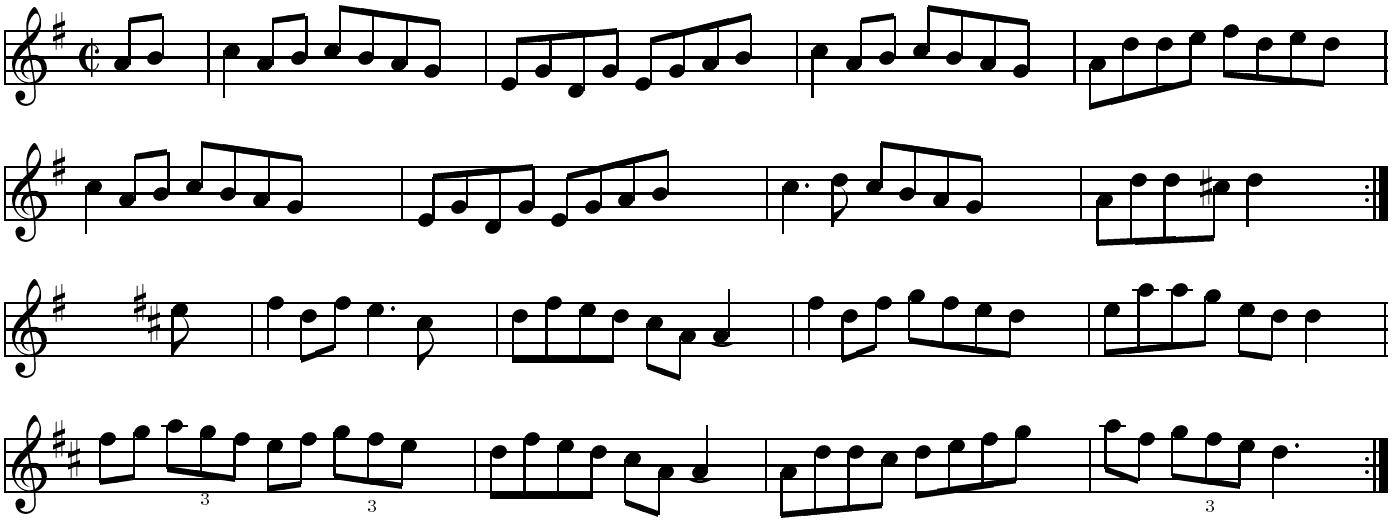


41. The Wise Maid *Johnny Doherty*

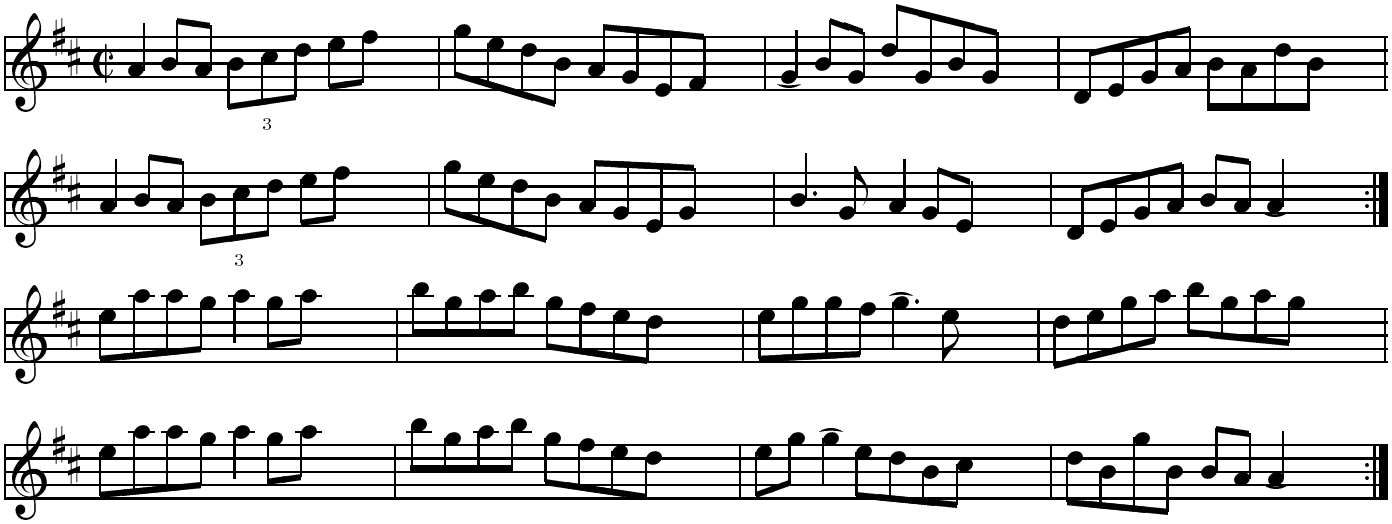
(Doherty's)



42. The Bank of Ireland

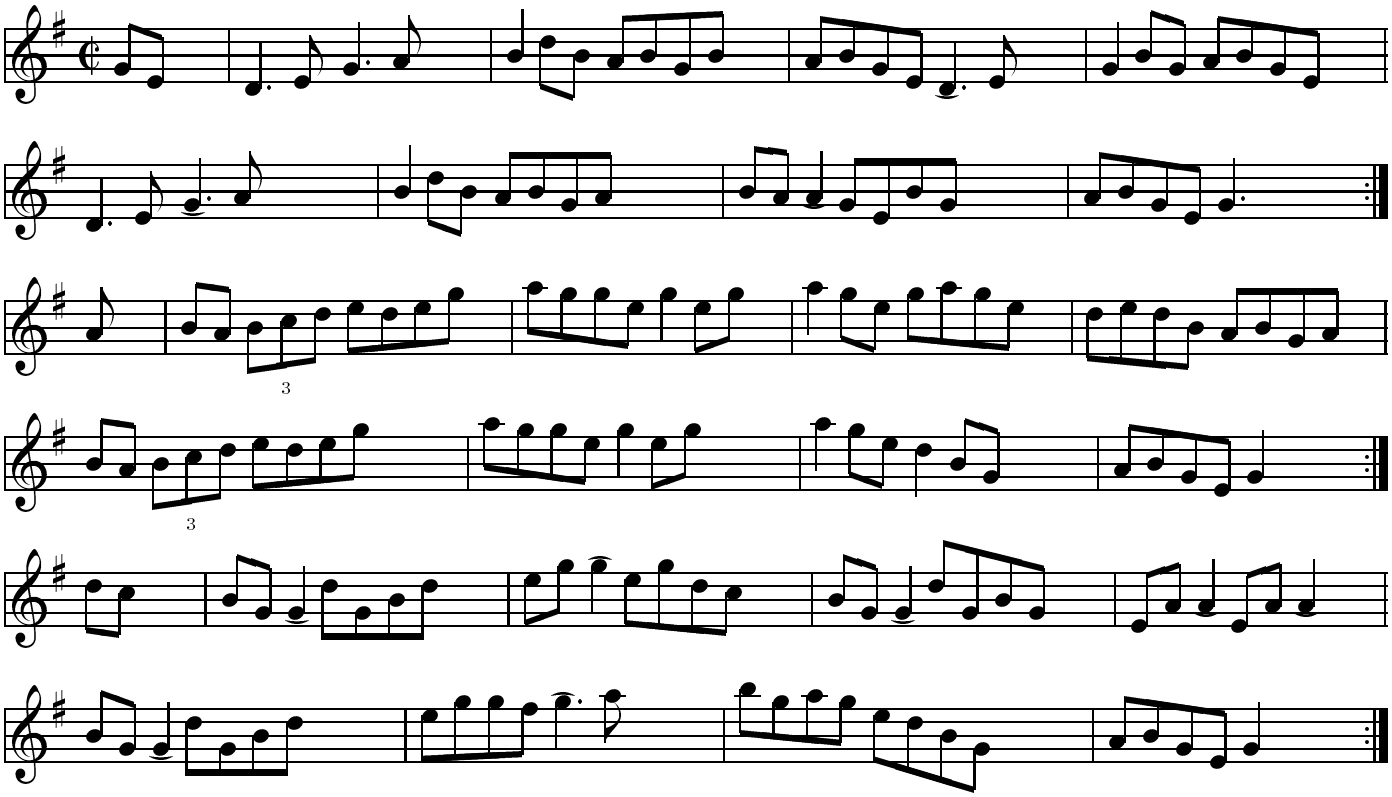


43. The Sligo Maid



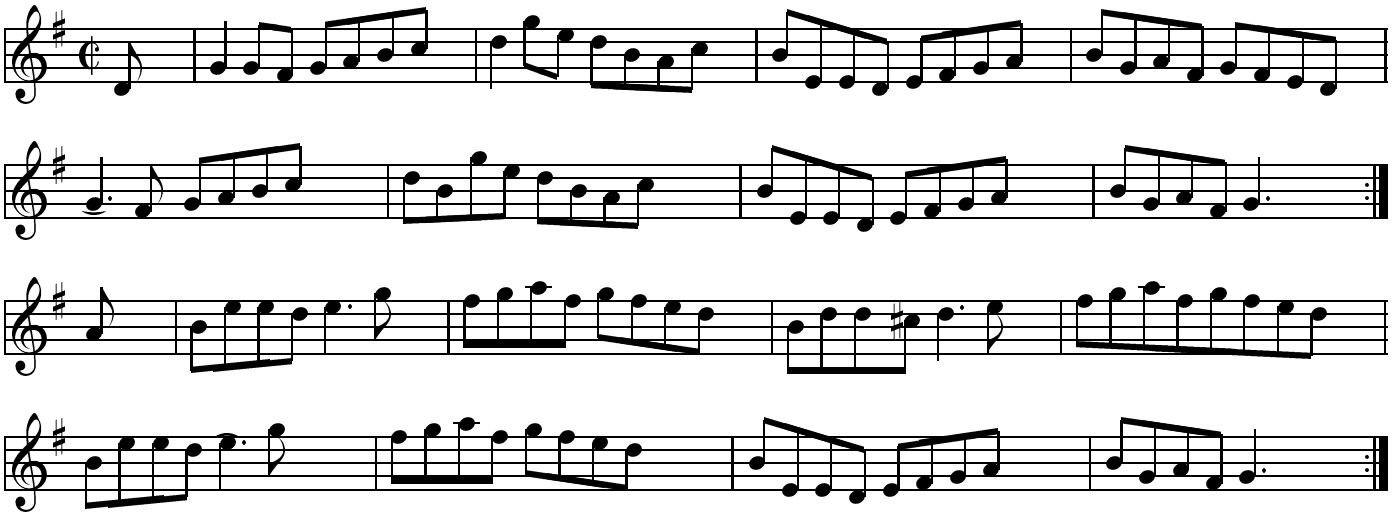
44. Christmas Eve *Tommy Coen*

(Tommy Coen's)



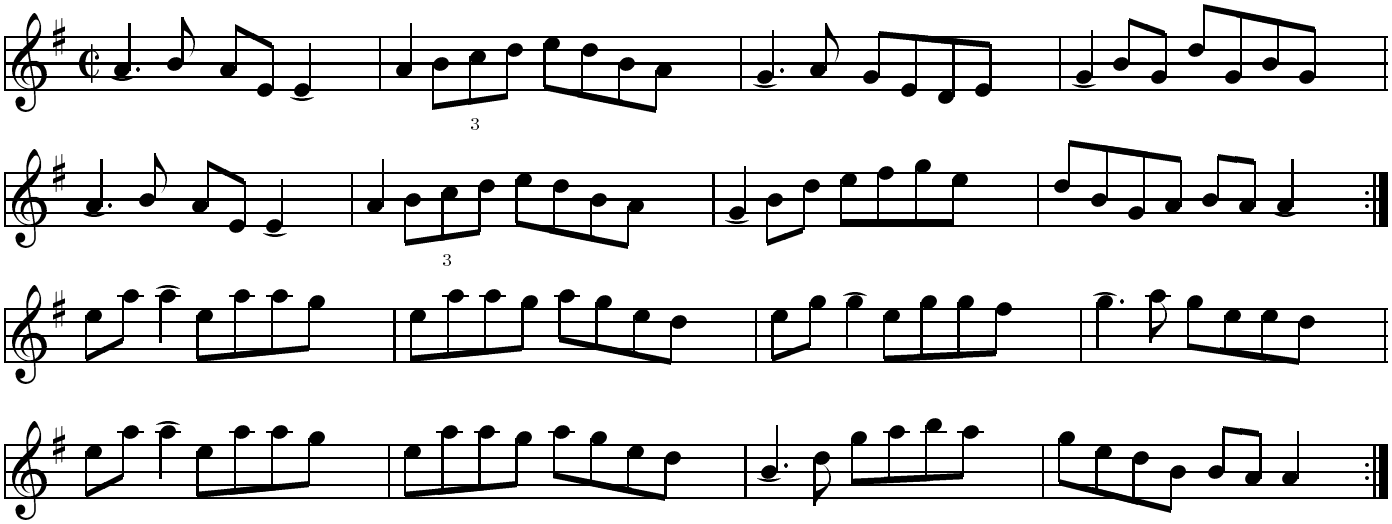
45. The Temperance Reel

(The Teetotaller's Reel)

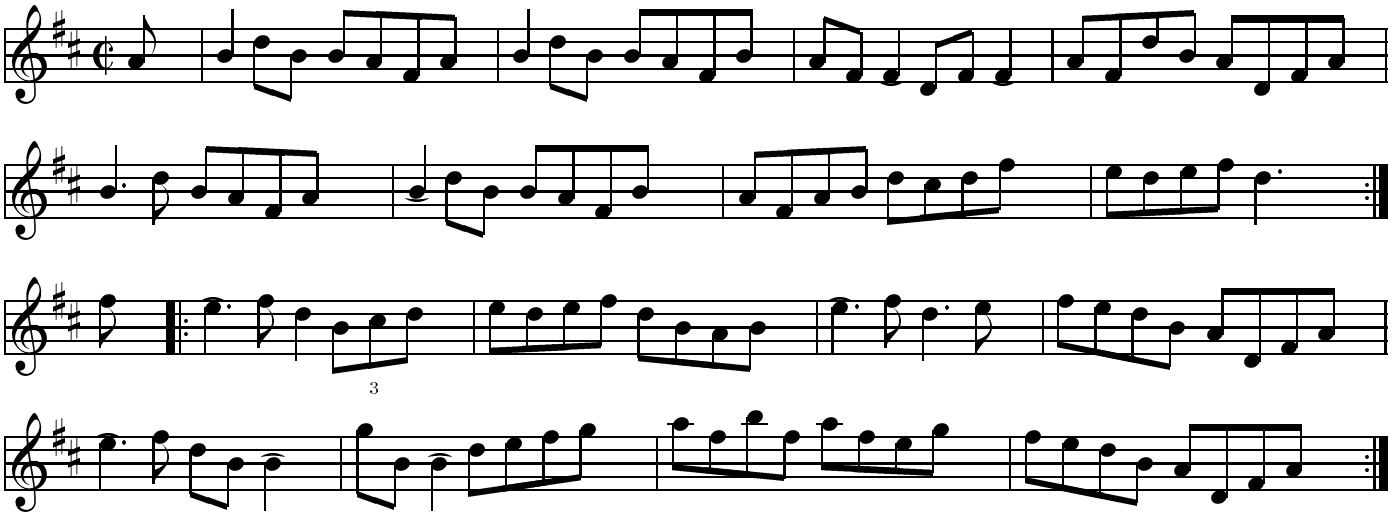


46. Junior Crehan's Favorite

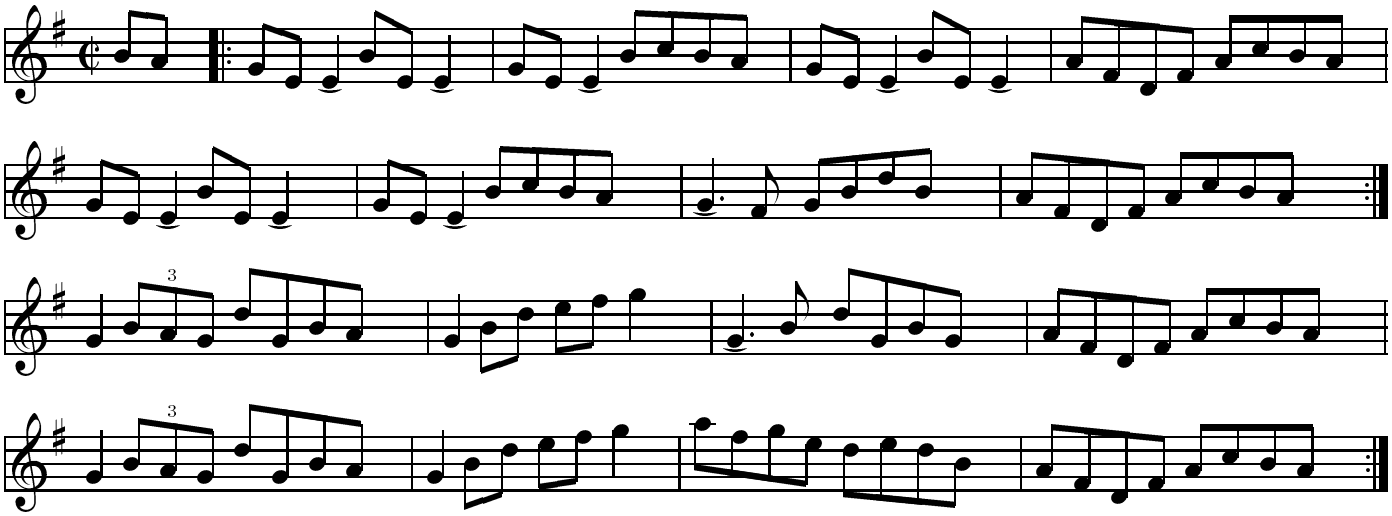
(The Knotted Cord)



47. The Earl's Chair

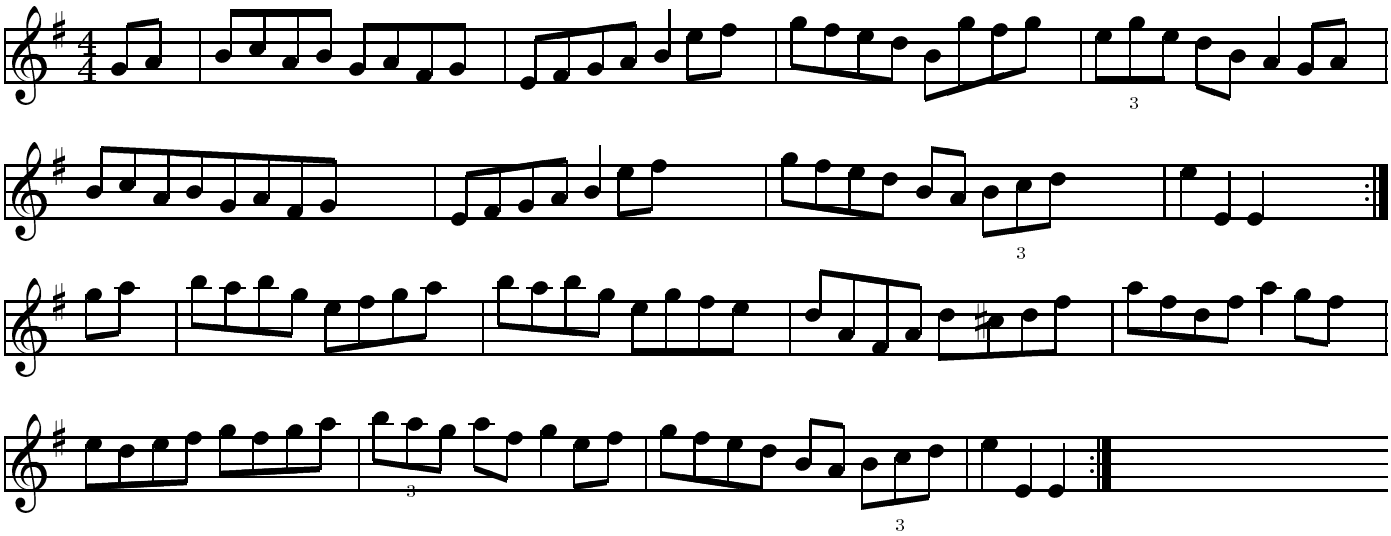


48 . The Fermoy Lasses

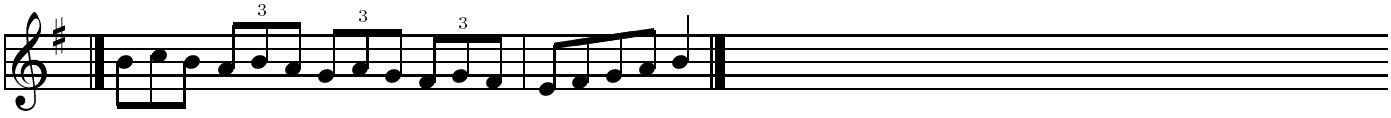


Hornpipes

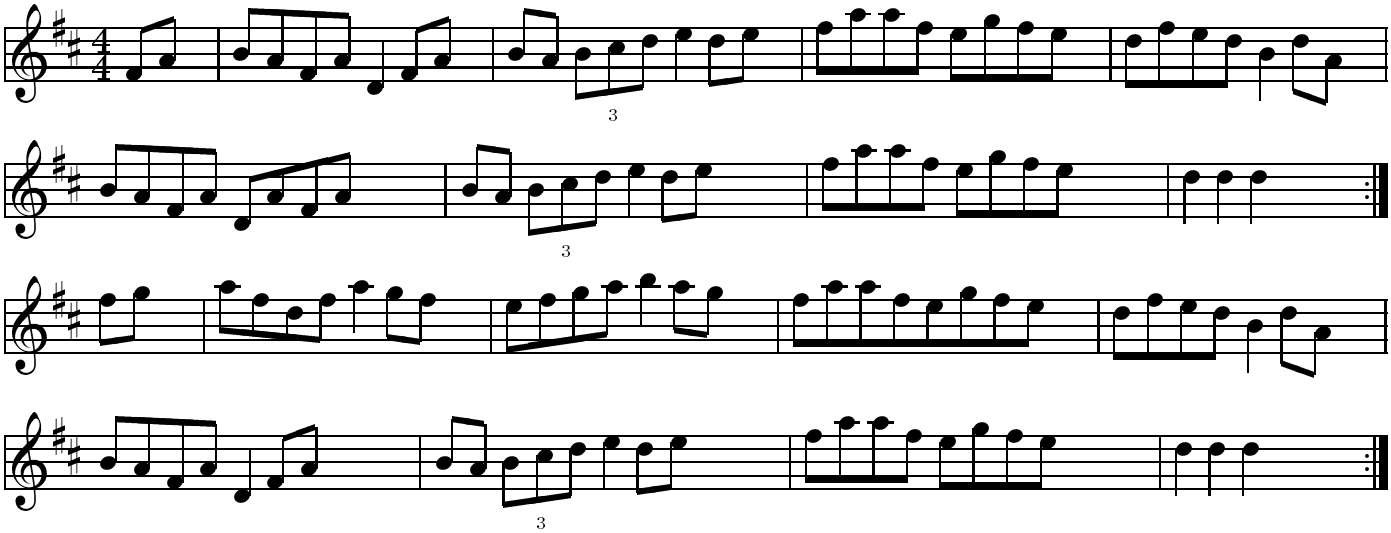
49. The Rights of Man



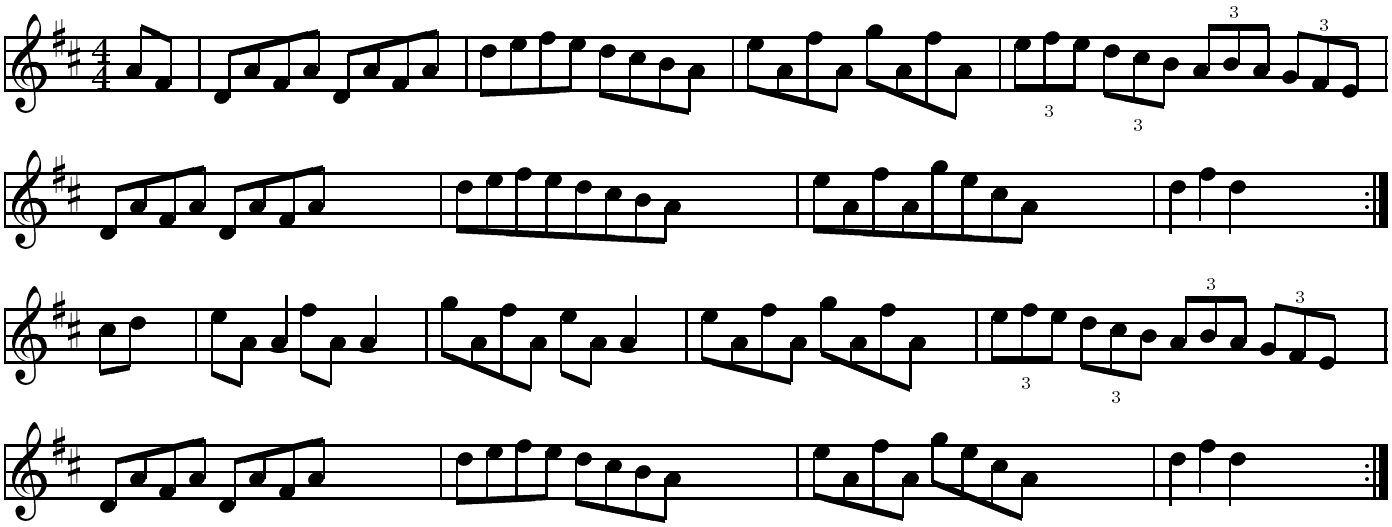
The first measure is often played in triplets:



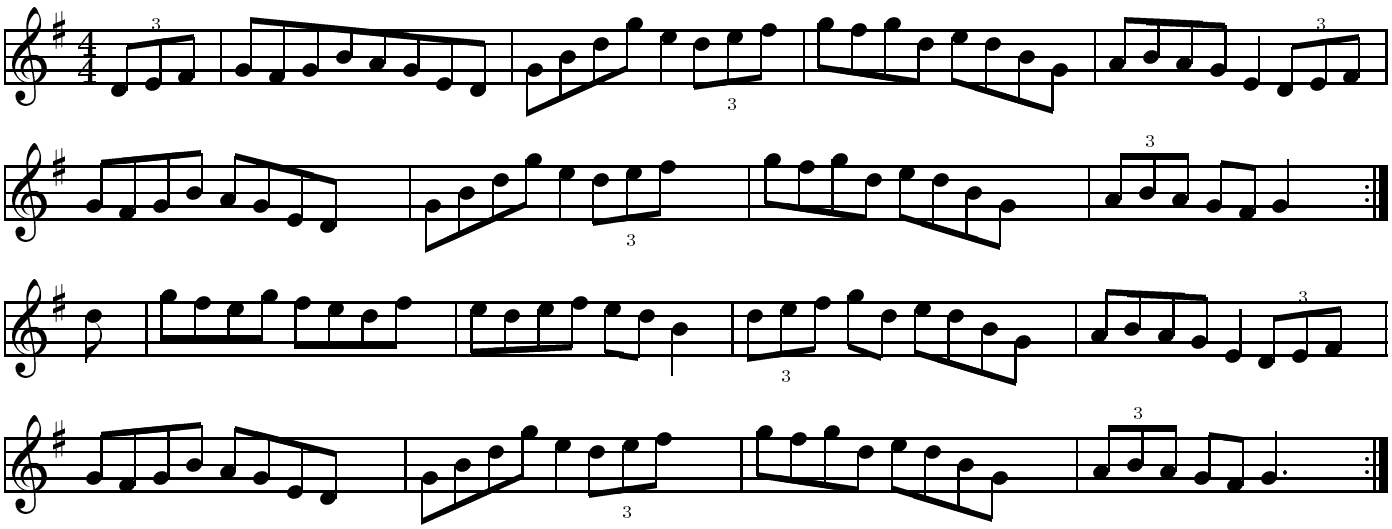
50. The Boys of Bluehill



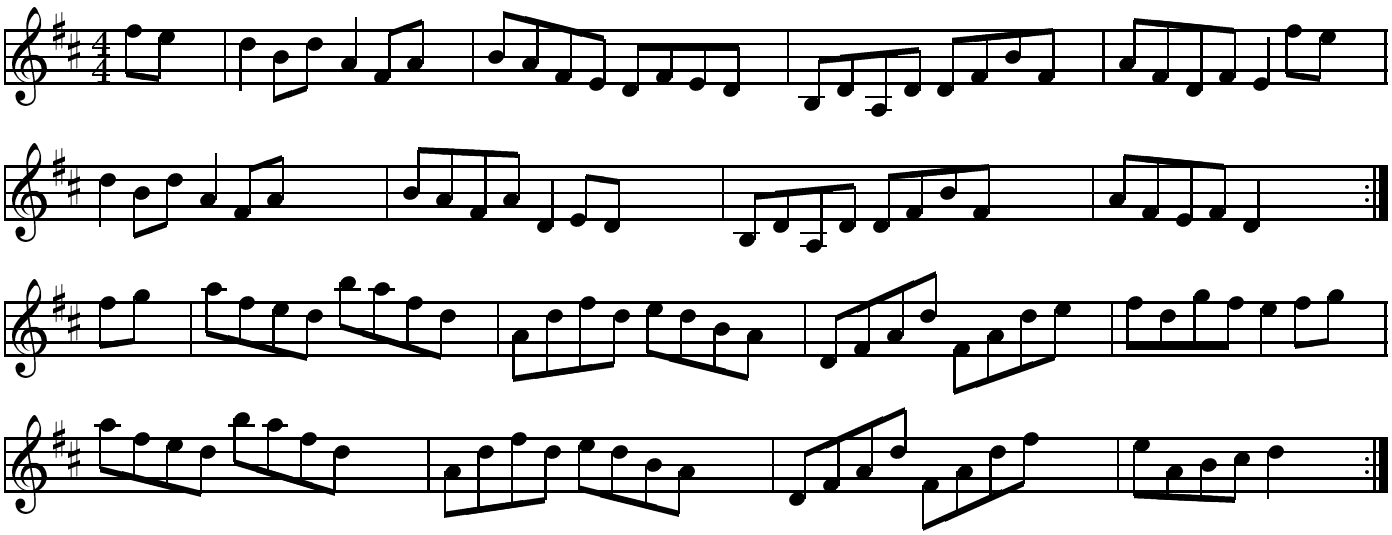
51. Harvest Home



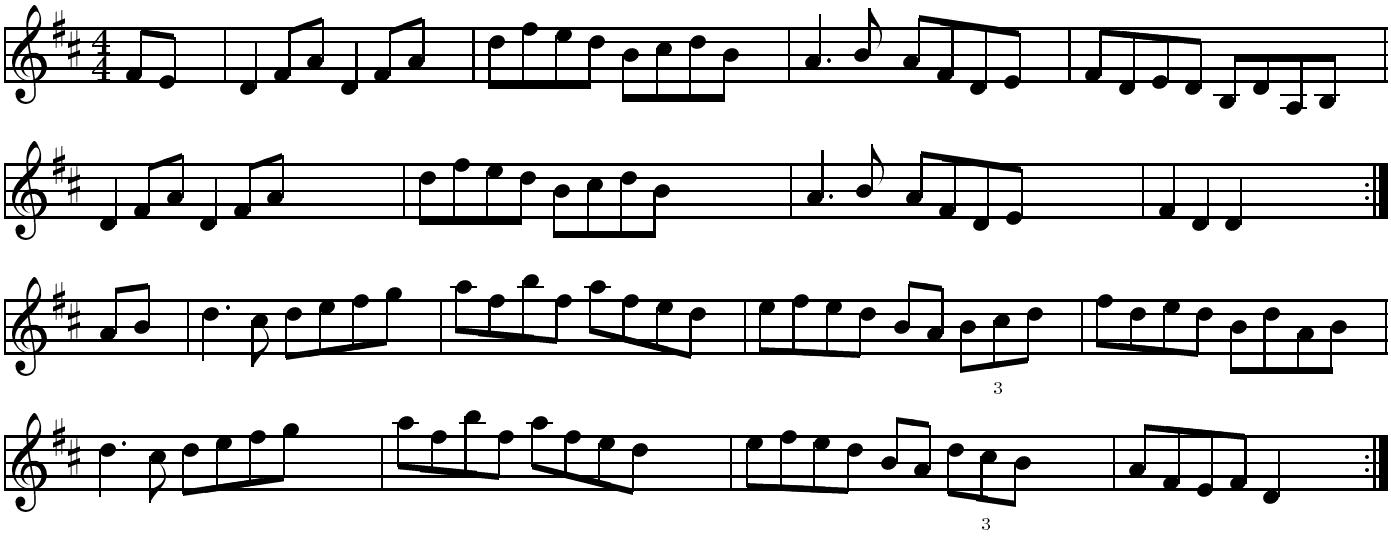
52. Off to California



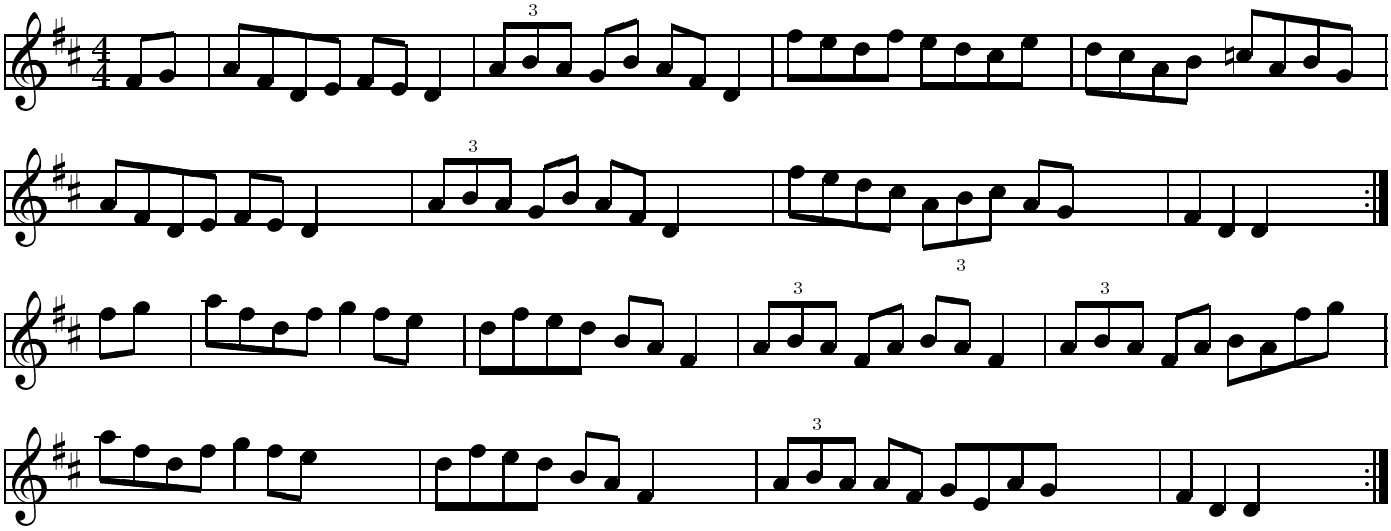
53. Kitty's Wedding



54. The Home Ruler

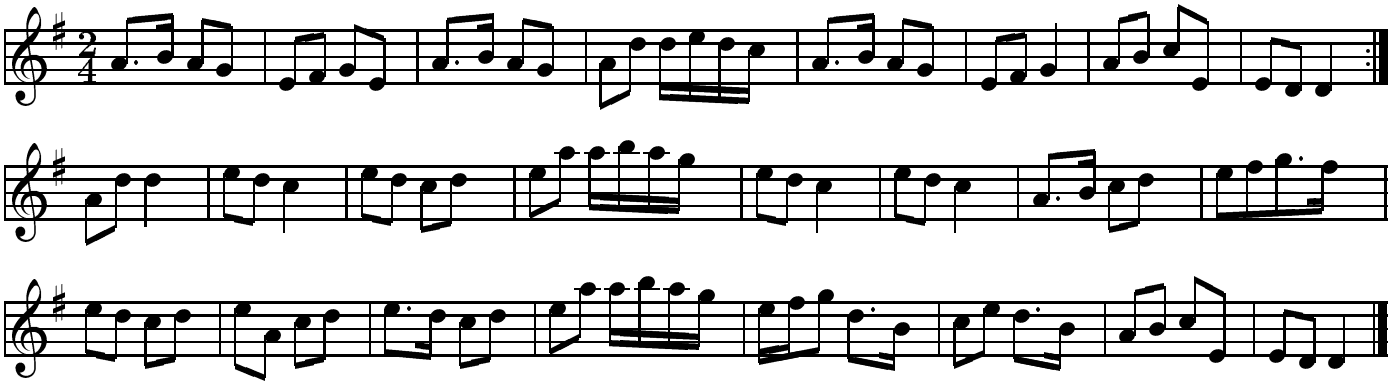


55. The Plains of Boyle



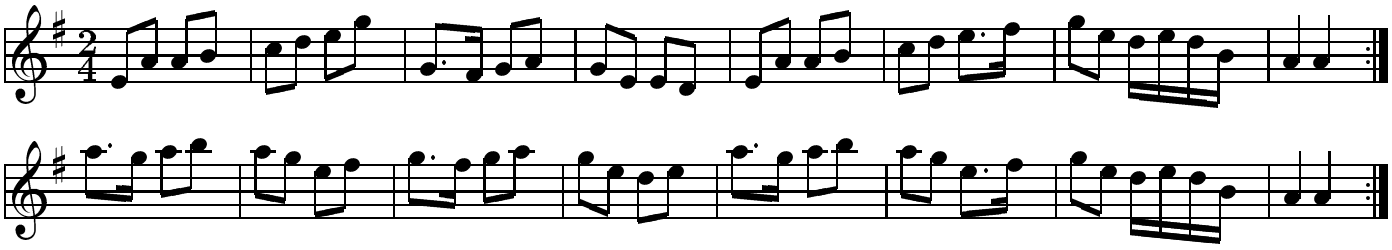
Polkas

56. The Ballydesmond Polka #1



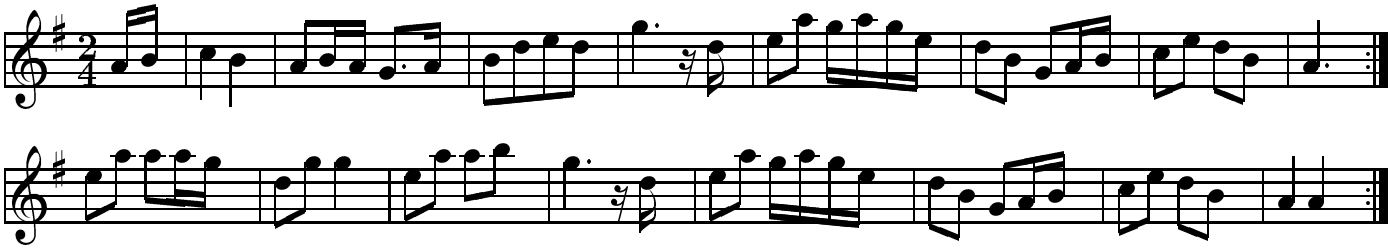
57. The Ballydesmond Polka #2

(Maurice Manley's)

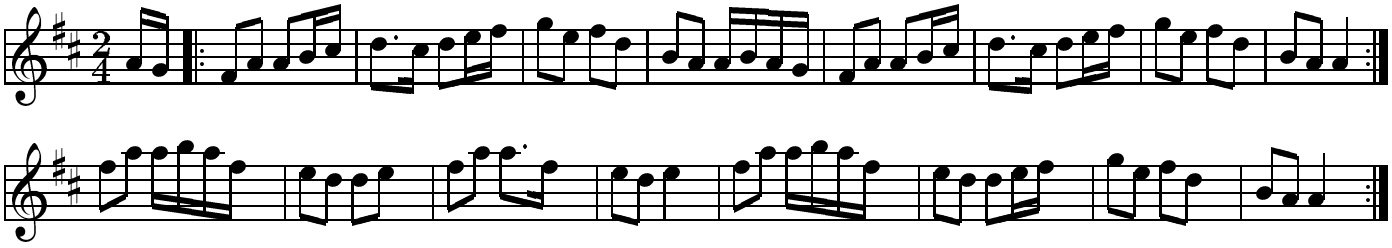


58. The Ballydesmond Polka #3

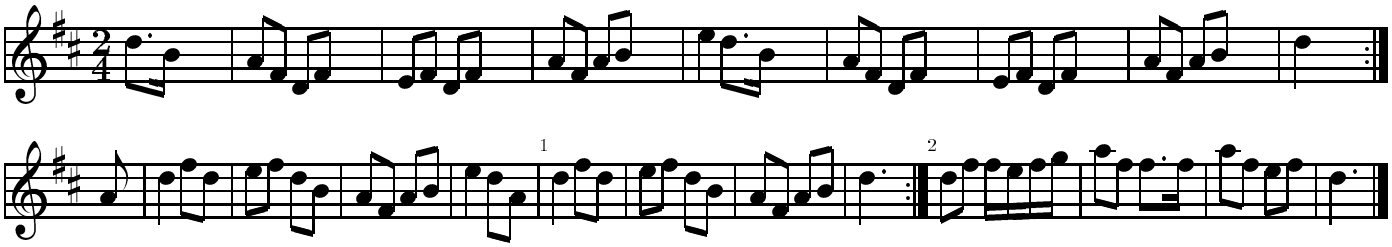
(Tom Billy's)



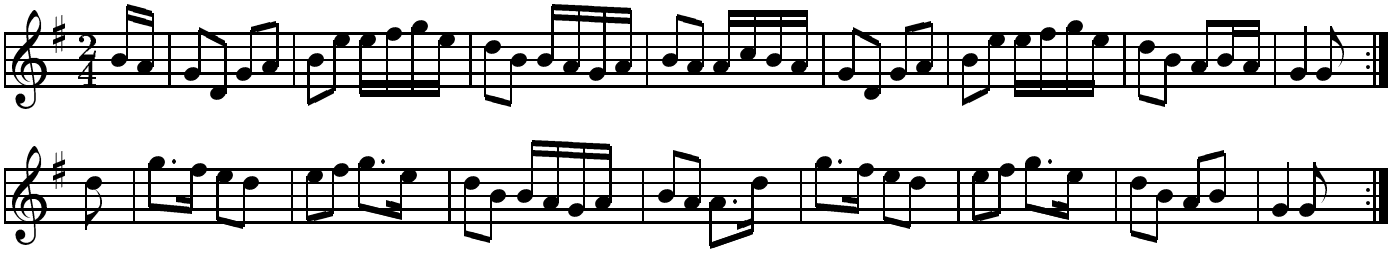
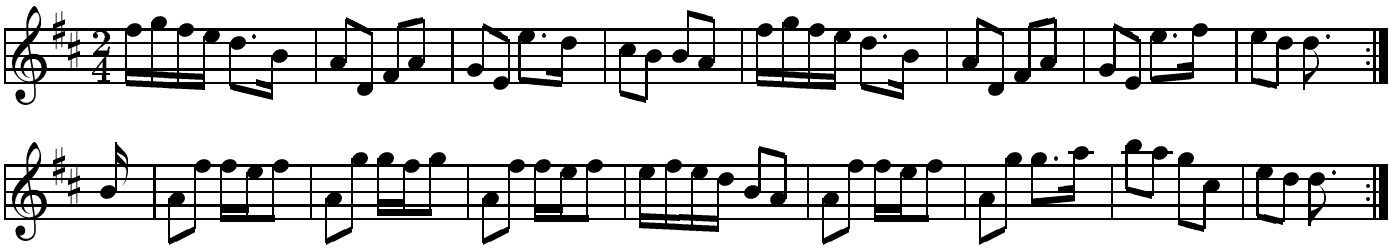
59. Spanish Lady



60. Charlie Harris' Polka



61. Maggie in the Woods



62. Denis Murphy's Polka