

NIGEL GATHERER'S Music of the British Isles SERIES

THE MUSIC OF the British Isles is incredibly rich and varied, each village, town and county having its own traditions, sometimes dating back centuries. In this,

my third exploration of British music and song for the BMG, we'll visit various corners of our islands and celebrate both their differences and commonalities.



Major McLean (Niel Gow)

slow air

Musical score for Major McLean (Niel Gow) in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of six systems of music, each with a treble clef staff and a banjo staff below it. The banjo staff shows fret numbers and fingerings. The treble staff shows the melody with accidentals and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

System 1: Treble: Em, Em, D, G, Am, Em. Banjo: 0 2 2 4 | 0 4 2 4 0 | 2 0 0 2 | 0 2 2 0 | 0 2 2 4

System 2: Treble: G, Bm, Em, G, G. Banjo: 0 4 0 2 | 0 1 0 2 0 4 | 0 2 2 | 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0

System 3: Treble: D, Am, D, Em, C, Bm, F#m, Em, Am. Banjo: 4 2 0 0 | 2 0 4 2 0 1 | 2 2 4 0 | 4 0 2 0 0 2 | 0 0 2 0 1

System 4: Treble: Bm, Em, G, G, D, Am, D. Banjo: 0 2 0 4 2 4 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 4 2 0 2 0 1 | 2 0 4 2 0 1

System 5: Treble: Em, C, Bm, F#m, Em, Am, Bm, Em. Banjo: 2 2 4 0 | 4 4 0 2 | 0 0 2 0 1 | 0 2 0 4 2



Niel Gow (1727-1807) was one of the most famous fiddlers of all time, being known throughout Scotland even in his own life. He lived in Inver, near Dunkeld, and there is a memorial to him in Dunkeld Cathedral. His son Nathaniel published many collections of tunes played and composed by his father, and these books formed the bedrock of Scottish fiddle repertoire. Niel was in great demand to play for dances and often travelled fair distances to perform.



Speed the Plough (John Moorhead)



John Moorhead (c1760-1804) worked at Sadler's Wells theatre, and wrote this tune under the name The Naval Pillar for a musical play; it was so popular it was used in another musical called Speed the Plough, after which it took that name. Although he was well respected as a composer, he suffered from debilitating mental health problems, and eventually took his own life.



Rochdale Coconut Dance (traditional)

BMG16-2



Bacup Coconut Dance (traditional)

Musical score for Bacup Coconut Dance in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of four systems of music, each with a treble clef staff and a banjo staff. Chords are indicated above the treble staff: G, G, Bm, D, C, Am, D7, G, Em, G, G, D, Em, G, D, G. The banjo staff contains fret numbers (0-5) and rhythmic patterns. A photograph of dancers in traditional costumes is included on the right side of the score.

Both the Rochdale and Bacup Coconut dances have their origins in the mid-19th century. The Britannia Coconutters in Bacup continue this tradition to this day

I learned Dregs of the Mashtub from Christina MacAulay, a Scottish whistle player living in Wales. She learned it from fiddler Bob Evans, who often plays it at Cardiff sessions. He got it from a 19th century collection by Owain Alaw.



Dregs of the Mashtub (Diferiad y Gwerwyn) (trad)

Musical score for Dregs of the Mashtub in G major, 3/4 time. The score consists of three systems of music, each with a treble clef staff and a banjo staff. Chords are indicated above the treble staff: D, D, D, D, G, A, G, A, A, D, D, A, G, D, D, A, G, A, A, D. The banjo staff contains fret numbers (0-7) and rhythmic patterns.

BMG16-3



The Oak (Steve Knightly)

Am G Am G

The limbs, the veins, the head and the heart The earth, the roots, the leaves and the bark.

Am G Am G Am

For shelter and shade was the oak tree grown; For church and cradle,

G Am G Am G Am G

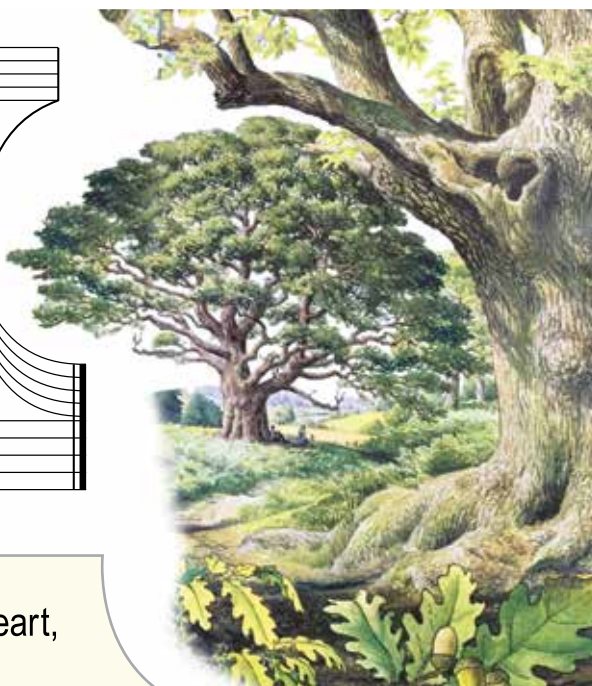
hearth and home. With arms so strong they hold the sky

Am C

Break the branch and the

G Am G

heart won't die.



Am G
Ch. The limbs, the veins, the head and the heart,
Am G
The earth, the roots, the leaves and the bark;
Am G Am G
The limbs, the veins, the head and the heart, the earth, the roots, the leaves and the bark.

BMG16-4

2. What can grow if the sea returns? What can live when the
G Am G Am G
plant grain burns? Cut the branch and your crops will fail,
Am G Am G
Tear the leaves and your ships won't sail.

Am *G* *Am*
Ch. The limbs, the veins, the head and the heart, the earth, the roots,
G *Am* *G*
 the leaves and the bark; the limbs, the veins, the head and the heart,
Am *G*
 The earth, the roots, the leaves and the bark.

Musical notation for the first system of the song. It consists of three measures. The first measure has a treble staff with a melody of quarter notes and a bass staff with fingerings: 2-2-2-0, 2-2-2-0, 0-0-0-0. The second measure has a treble staff with a melody of quarter notes and a bass staff with fingerings: 0-0-0-0, 0-0-0-0, 0-0-0-0. The third measure has a treble staff with a melody of quarter notes and a bass staff with fingerings: 2-2-2-0, 2-2-2-0. Chords are indicated above the treble staff: Am, G, Am.

Am *G*
 3. Seven generations the oak trees grow,
Am *G*
 (The limbs, the veins, the head and the heart)
Am *G*
 Roots reach deep to the rocks & bones.
Am *G*
 (The earth, the roots, the leaves and the bark).

Am *G*
Ch. The limbs, the veins, the head and the heart,
Am *G*
 The earth, the roots, the leaves and the bark;
Am *G*
 The limbs, the veins, the head and the heart,
Am *G*
 The earth, the roots, the leaves and the bark.



This song was written by Steve Knightly of the band Show of Hands



The Flitter Dance (traditional)

Am Am G Em Am Am

G Em Am Am Am Am Am

C G Am Am Am



Peter O'Tavy (traditional)

G Em D D D D7 D7 G

G Em D D D7 D7 G G

G Em C G C G Em D

G Em C G Em D7 G G

BMG16-6

I got both of these tunes from a recording by English fiddler/mandolinist Dave Swarbrick.



Fly and Dodger (Liz Carroll)

Sheet music for the first system of 'Fly and Dodger'. It consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in eighth and quarter notes. Below the treble staff is a banjo staff with a 4/4 time signature, showing fret numbers (0, 2) and a capo position of 2. Chords G, C, G, C, and D are indicated above the treble staff.

Sheet music for the second system of 'Fly and Dodger'. It continues the melody and banjo accompaniment from the first system. Chords G, C, G, C, and D are indicated above the treble staff.

Sheet music for the third system of 'Fly and Dodger'. The melody and banjo accompaniment continue. Chords G, C, Em, D, G, C, G, D, G, and C are indicated above the treble staff.

Sheet music for the fourth system of 'Fly and Dodger'. The melody and banjo accompaniment continue. Chords Em, D, Am, C, G, and D are indicated above the treble staff.



Liz Carroll (born 1956) is one of the most respected Irish fiddler and composer today. She grew up in Chicago in an Irish-American community and started playing fiddle at nine years old. Her tunes have been recorded hundreds of times.

The *Fly and Dodger* was named for "...that boat-lover I married, Charles." and was recorded on her album *Lost In the Loop* (2000).

NIGEL GATHERER'S

Music of the British Isles SERIES

Nigel Gatherer's
Banjo
www.nigelgatherer.com

BMG The BRITISH
FEDERATION
13-15 JUNE 2025



Harper's Frolic (traditional)

Musical score for Harper's Frolic in D major, 2/4 time. The score consists of five systems of music, each with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. Chord progressions are indicated above the treble staff. Fingering numbers (0-4) are shown below the bass staff. The score includes a repeat section with first and second endings.

BMG16-Joint Session

I learned this tune from the playing of the English folksinger and melodeonist Pete Coe, with whom I have done a little bit of playing. It's a well-known tune in English sessions which first appeared in the mid-18th century. It was recorded with great effect by the New Victory Band in 1978.

