



MIXTER MAXTER 35

Few poems have captured our imaginations as much as Burns's Tam o' Shanter. Written in 1790, after Burns persuaded Francis Grose to include a drawing of Alloway Kirk in his *Antiquities of Scotland* (1791). Grose agreed, if the bard supplied something to print beside it. The eventual result was "Tam o' Shanter."

*When chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neebors, neebors meet*

Chapman Billies (Nigel Gatherer)

*While we sit bousing at the nappy,
And getting fou and unco' happy,
We think o' lang Scots miles,
The mosses, and the heather, and the ghaies,
That lie between us and our auld acquaintance,
Whare sits our sulky sullen dowie wench,
Whare sits our sulky sullen dowie wench,
Whare sits our sulky sullen dowie wench,
Whare sits our sulky sullen dowie wench*

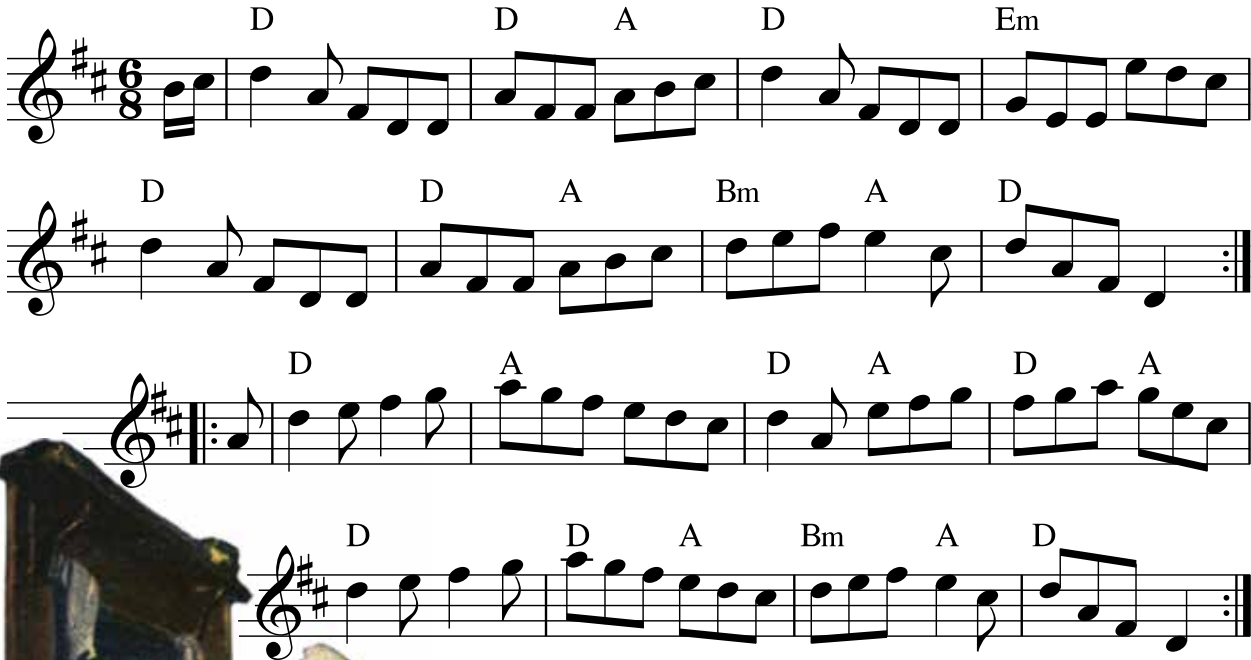
It's market day in Ayr and street vendors are packing up. Tam heads to Kirkton Jean's tavern to meet with his old friend Souter Johnny. He drinks heartily at the ingle, swapping stories and exchanging secret looks with the landlady.



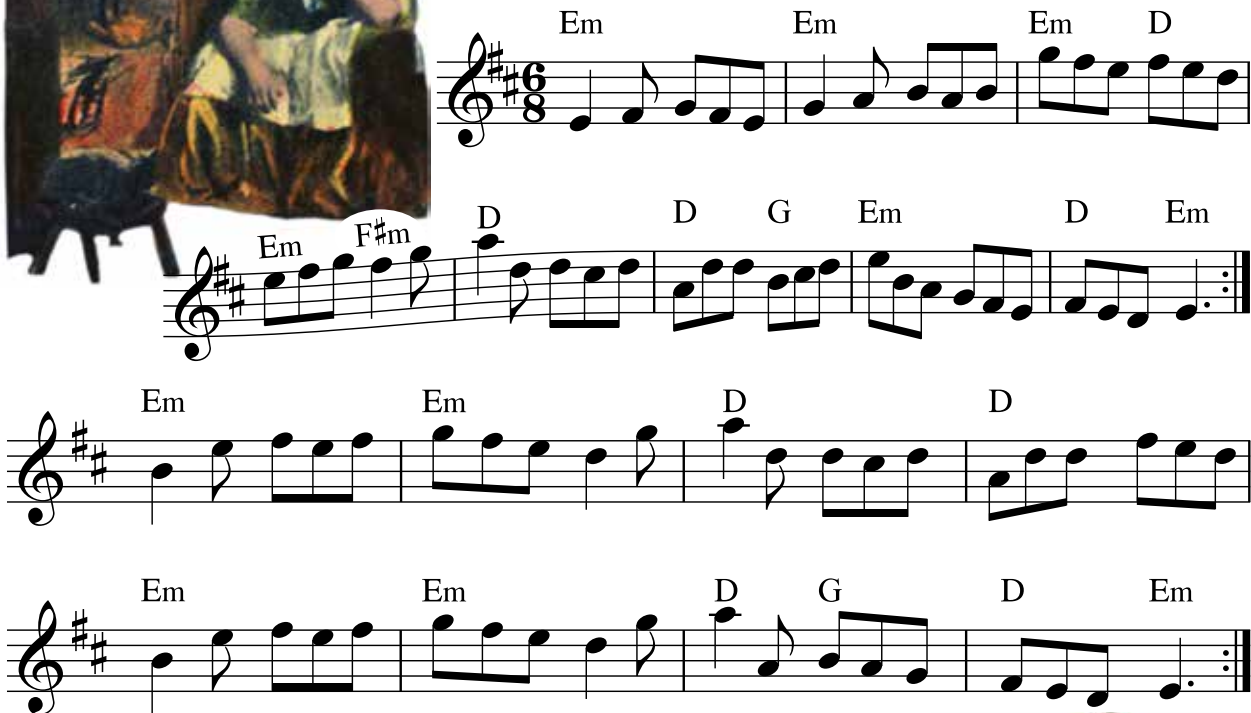
*Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.*

While Tam sits "bousin' at the nappy"
he thinks little of his long journey home,
nor his increasingly angry wife Kate
waiting for him.

Kate (traditional)



The Gathering Storm (unknown)

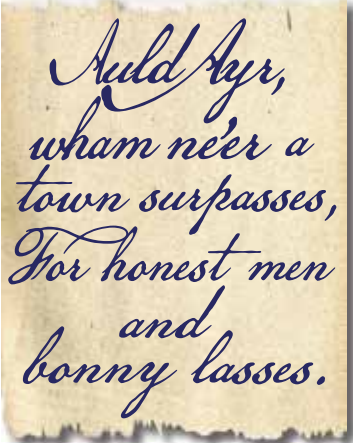


I adapted the first tune *Kate* from a setting in Johnson's *Caledonian Dances* (1748). The second tune, *The Gathering Storms*, was tweaked even more: I first heard it as a reel on the fiddler Archie McAllister's 1996 album of the same name. It wasn't quite right the way it was, so I turned it into a jig better to go with *Kate*.

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Honest Men and Bonny Lasses (William Marshall)



D D A D

D A D D D

D A D A

F#m Bm D A D

The Auld Toon o' Ayr (trad)

D G D D A7 G

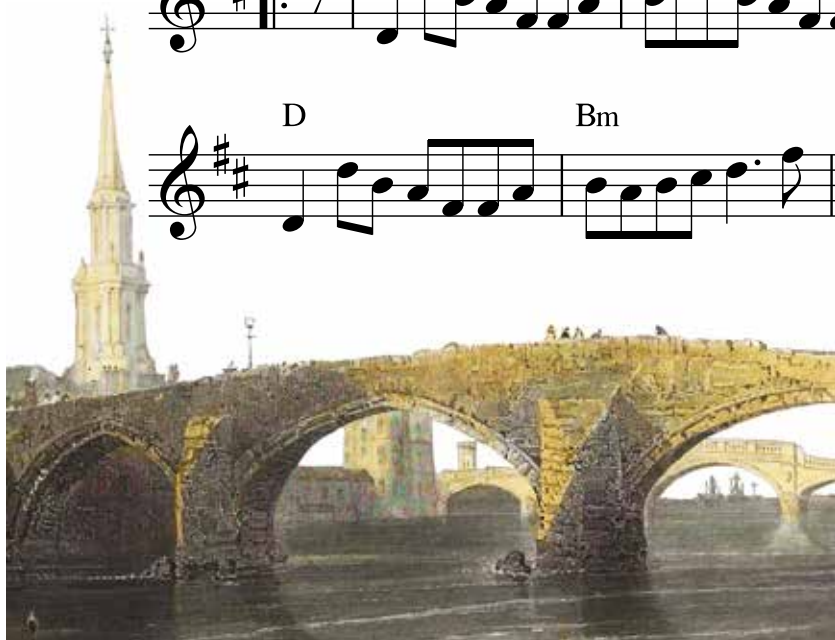
D G D Bm D D A

D G D D G D A7

D Bm A7 G D A

The great Scottish fiddler William Marshall (1748-1833) published the first tune above in his 1822 collection under the title *The Duchess of Manchester's Farewell to the Highlands of Scotland*, but in Niel Gow's 5th collection it acquired the name *Honest Men & Bonny Lasses*, probably in reference to Tam o' Shanter. *The Auld Toon o' Ayr* is adapted from a strathspey of that name in Middleton's Selection (1870).

MM34-3



Tam o' Shanter (Alex Doig)

*And at his elbow,
Souter Johnny,
His ancient, trusty,
drouthy crony;*

Souter Johnny (traditional)



The character of Tam was based on one of Burns's friends called Douglas Graham, who lived at Shanter Farm near Kirkoswald. The Kirkoswald, village shoemaker John Davidson inspired the character of Tam's drinking companion Souter Johnny. Davidson's cottage is now run by the National Trust for Scotland.

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Cold, Dark Night (unknown)

It was a cold, dark night, it wis quite a sight, pip-ers pip-in', wit-ches danc-in'

cold, dark night. Tam o' Shan-ter, he'd been drin-kin' in Ayr toon,

He saddled up his grey mare to head for Brig o' Doon

2. He cam across a kirk passing through Allo - way,
People laughin', people dancin' actin' merri - ly.

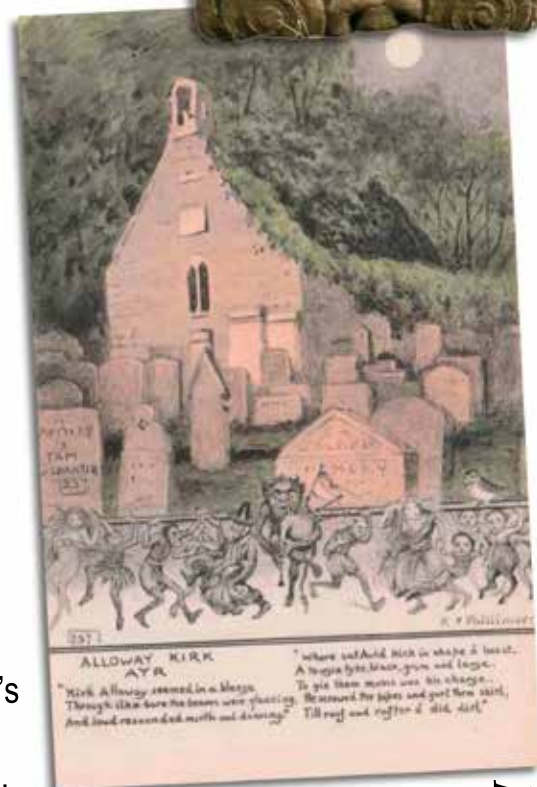
Ch. It was a cold, dark night, it wis quite a sight,
Pipers pipin', witches dancin' cold, dark night.

3. Tam wis entertained, let out a mighty cry,
Weel done, Cutty Sark!" an' then the music died.

Ch. It was a cold, dark night, it wis quite a sight,
Pipers pipin', witches dancin' cold, dark night.

4. The River Doon wis near, an' wi' the speed o' Tam's
grey horse, the witch got a piece o' the horse's tail,
but that wis a' she got.

Chorus x2



I got this song, which reduces the Tam o' Shanter story to four verses, on YouTube, by a folk group called Longshot Nelson and The Disjoints.

MM34-5

Finally wending his drunken way home, Tam hears
some commotion at the auld kirk at Alloway. He
creeps closer to see witches and warlocks dancing
away, and other-worldly pipers makin' a din.

Allowa' Kirk (Joseph Lowe)



Cutty Sark (traditional)



Both of these tunes were published in Joseph Lowe's 1844 collection. The Lowe family also published tunes called *Tam o' Shanter*, *Souter Johnny* (see p4) and *Tam's Grey Mare*.

Tam watched the diabolical shenanigans with amazement, but one of the ghouls caught his eye especially: Nannie, young and supple, leapin' an' dancin', dressed in a short chemise. Tam, bewitched, cried out "Weel done, Cutty-sark!"

Weel done, Cutty-sark!



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Nannie, Tam's "winsome wench," was well known on Carrick Shore for luring boats to their destruction and spoiling crops.

*That night enlisted in the core,
(Lang after kend on Carrick shore;*

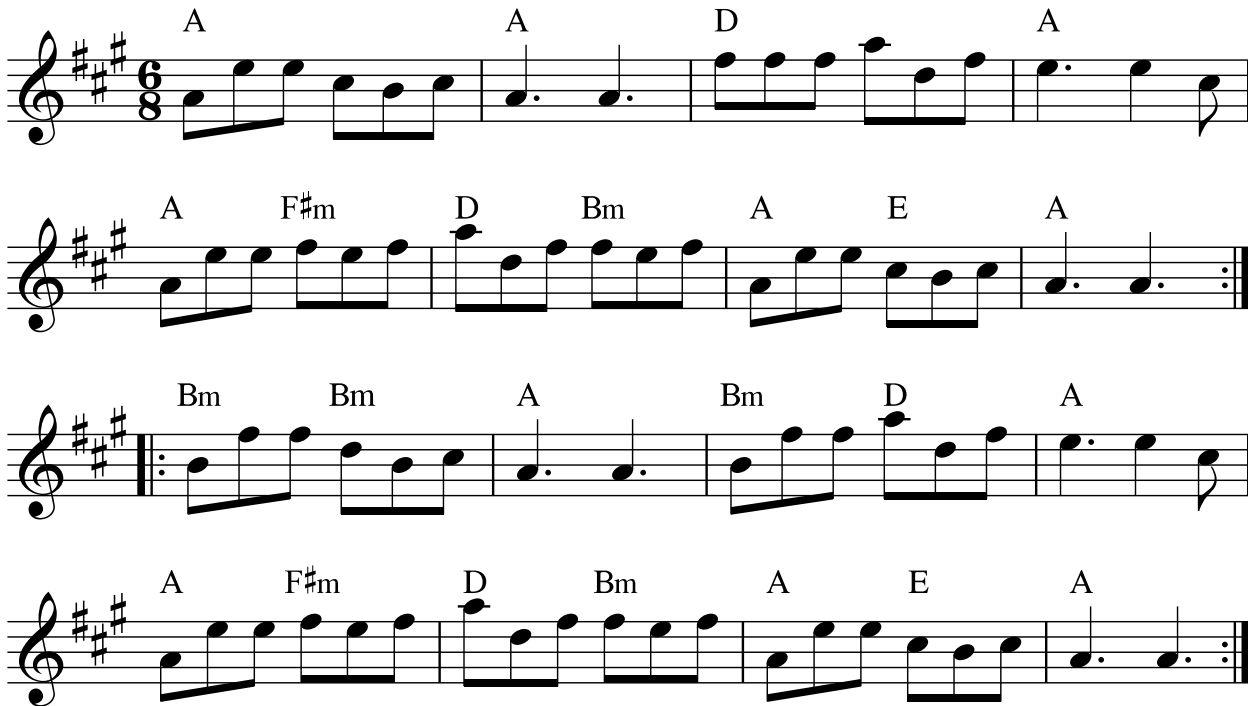
Carrick Shore (Bill Cook)

Fiddler Bill Cook (1939-2019) led the Stirling Strathspey & Reel Society and was leader of the Scottish Fiddle Orchestra.

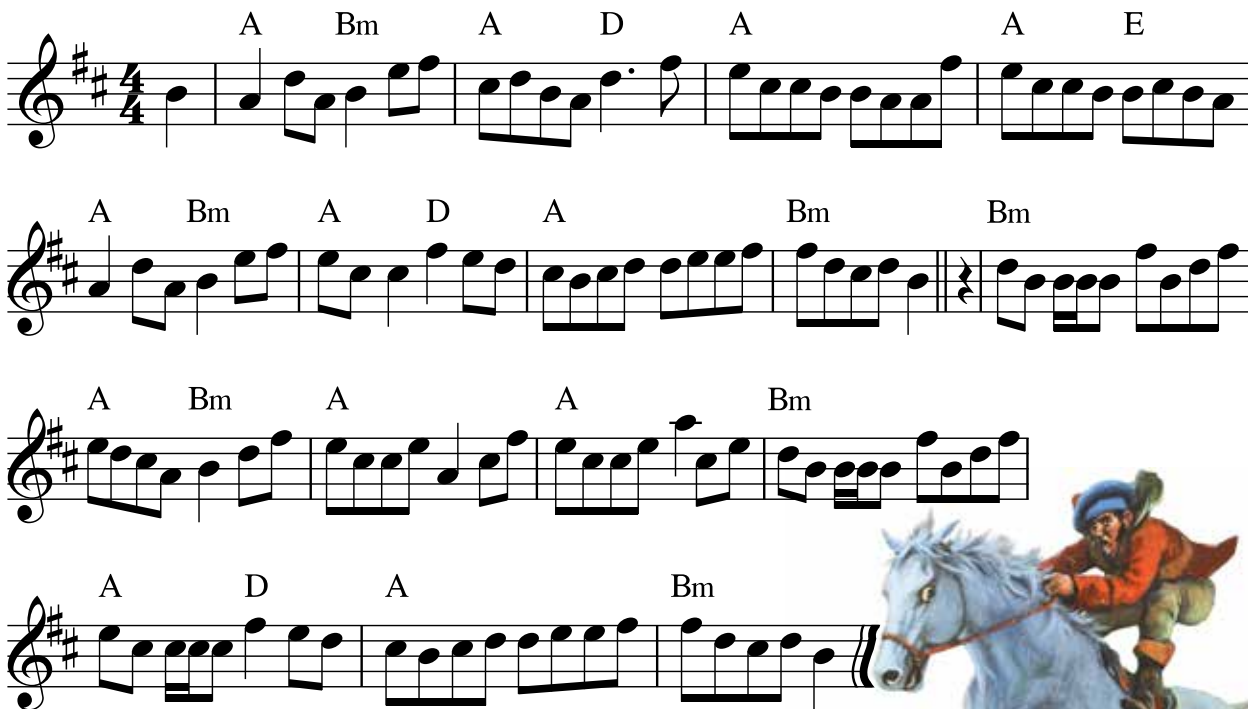


Brig o' Doon (PM Charles Turnbull)

slow march

**The Grey Mare's Tail** (Dougie Pincock)

slow reel



The slow pipe march was originally called *The Brig o' Don*, but it was recorded by the Gordon Highlanders in 1933 under the title *Brig o' Doon*, and that's good enough for me! Dougie Pincock was the piper in The Battlefield Band in the 1980s.

Once Tam had blurted his foolish utterance, the music stopped and all went dark. The witches realised they had an intruder and chased Tam and Meg who, knowing that witches couldn't cross water, galloped for the Brig o' Doon. Just before they crossed, Nannie reached out and caught Meg by the tail, leaving her with scarce a stump.

