



*A New Collection of  
Australian Convict Tunes*

*For the Year 2018*

*Arranged for Violin, English Flute,  
Piano-forte and guitar*

*Historical notes*

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## *Acknowledgements*



This book was developed as part of the *Dancing in Fetters: Culture of Convict Dance* exhibition in the Redcliffe Museum, August-November 2018.

It presents a collection of tunes and some of the history behind them, with convict connections.

This insightful new research was undertaken at the Queensland University of Technology by dance historian Heather Blasdale Clarke, musical transcription by Roland Clarke and artwork and design by Isabel Clarke.

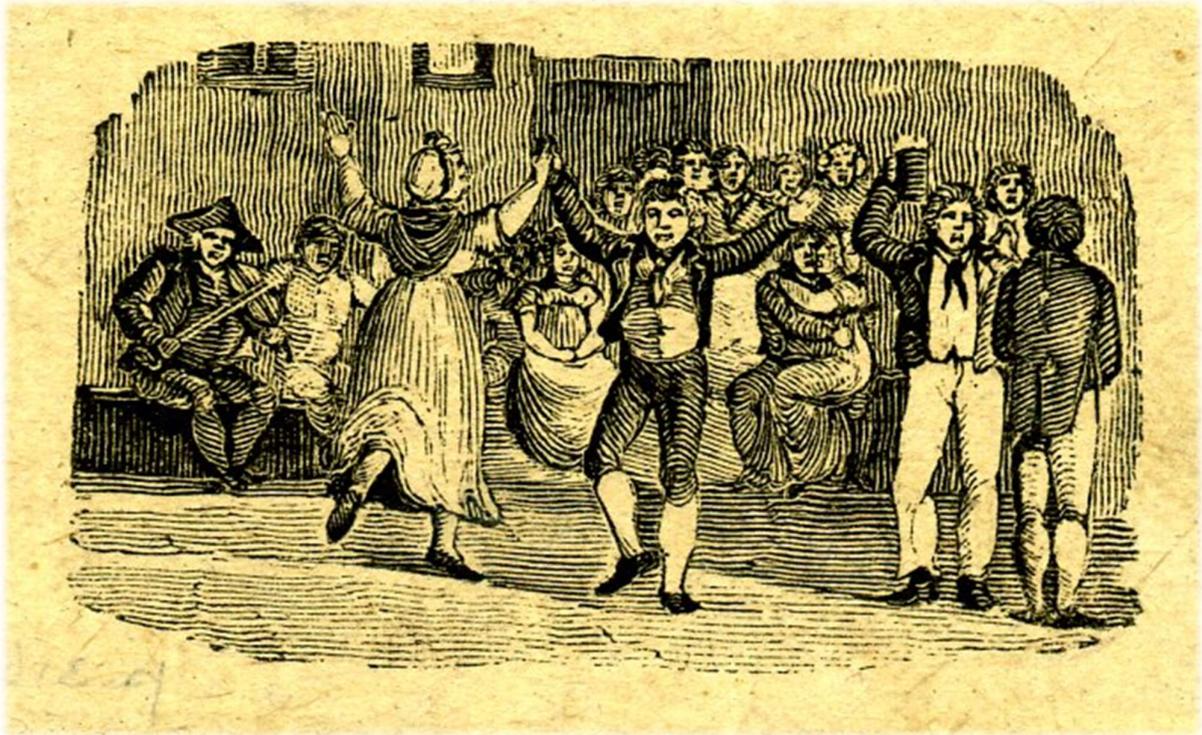


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## *Blewitt's Jig*

D Bm D Bm Em A7

5 D G D Em A7

9 D Em A7 D Bm Em D

This tune was composed in 1812 by Jonathan Blewitt, musical director of the Theatre Royal, Dublin, for a dance in the pantomime *The Island of the Saints*. Its fame continued throughout the nineteenth century when used for the song *Barney Brallaghan's Courtship* which was subsequently included in the 1830 play *Barney Brallaghan, or, Meet Me By Moonlight*. The song featured the line 'Don't say nay, Charming Judy Callaghan' giving rise to a range of other titles for the tune, encompassing the original name of *Blewitt's Jig* and *Miss Blewitt's Jig* through to *Barney Brallaghan's Courtship*, *Mrs. Barney Brallaghan*, *Twás on a windy night*, *Charming Judy Callaghan*, *Judy Callaghan* and *Meet me by moonlight*. In its original context as *Blewitt's Jig*, it appeared in Hime's *Collection of Country Dances for the present Year*, Dublin 1814.

The convict whistle player, Jeremiah Byrne used the tune in the 'hop shops' in the Rocks area of Sydney.

## Cheshire Rounds

D A7 G A7 D A7 D Am7

5 G Am D Am D A G Am D C6 D

The *Cheshire Rounds* had been published consistently in dance manuals since Playford's *The Dancing Master* in 1701 through to Preston's *Twenty Four Country Dances for the Year 1801*. By the time it was recorded in the *Sydney Gazette* of 1803, it had acquired the status of a favourite folk dance. The English music historian, Charles Burney (1726-1814) considered it the only true English dance tune.

The dance was reported at a 'lower order' wedding in the Rocks, Sydney in 1803 conducted by the convict priest, James Dixon. It was common for weddings in the colony to be celebrated for three days with dancing and other merriment.



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*On the evening of Saturday, the 7th instant a Celebration of Nuptials took place on the Rocks, at which a numerous group of congratulants assembled. The merry dance commenced, and the fair bride led down the Country Bumpkin, which was performed in character. The Cheshire rounds and the Irish trot were also gone through with equal success.*

*Sydney Gazette, Sunday, May 15, 1803*



# Darby Kelly



*Darby Kelly* was first 'sung with great applause by Mr Webb, at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, London' in 1811 and became a popular broadside ballad. It tells the story of three generations of soldiers: the singer's grandfather who served with Marlborough at Blenheim, his father with Wolfe in Quebec, and himself with Wellington in the Peninsular Wars.

Although there is no record of it in dance collections of the period, the convict whistle player, Jeremiah Byrne used the tune in the 'hop shops' (dance halls) in the Rocks area of Sydney.



## Darby Kelly.

My Grandfather beat a drum so neat,  
His name was Darby Kelly, O,  
No lad so true, as not to see,  
at Bull Run, or Minden, O,  
When Marlborough's name first said his name,  
My Grandfather beat the drum of war,  
At Blenheim he, at Ramillie  
Made runs to single far and near.  
For with his wrist, he'd such a twist,  
The girls would leer you don't know how,  
They laugh'd and sigh'd and cry'd and dy'd,  
To hear him beat his row dow dow,  
They laugh'd and sigh'd, and cry'd and died,  
To hear him, &c.

A son he had which was his dad,  
As tight as steel as any O,  
You ever would know tho' you should go,  
From Chester to Kilkenny, O,  
When great Wolfe died his country's pride,  
Twas this my dapper father beat,  
Each date and ball remember still,  
How loud, how long how stout, how neat  
With each drum sock he had the trick.

The girls would leer you don't know how  
Their eyes would glisten their eyes would li-  
ten.  
To hear him beat his row dow dow,  
With a row dow dow,  
To hear him beat the row dow dow,  
Their eyes, &c.

Yet e'er I wed, ne'er it be said,  
But what I the foe dare to meet,  
With Wellington, old Erin's son,  
To help to make them beat retreat,  
King Arthur once or I in a duce,  
Was call'd the hero of the age,  
But what is he to him we see,  
The Arthur of the modern page!  
For by the powers from Lisbon lower,  
Their trophies here to grace his bow,  
And made them prizes from Spain to France  
With his English, Irish, row dow dow,  
With his English, Irish, row dow dow,  
And made them prizes from Spain to France  
With his English, Irish, row dow dow.

Printed and Sold by J. PIERCE, 14, Great St. Andrew Street, Seven Dials.

## *Drops of Brandy*



This popular dance tune first appeared in the Drummond Castle manuscript in 1734 and was published in numerous dance collections throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, remaining a favourite folk dance tune to the current day. It is mentioned in four convict records.



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*'Sydney Smith, for being riotous, drunk, &c., and dancing in the street to the tune of Drops o' Brandy, which he himself played on a mouth organ, had to cash up five bob, and was warned in future to hide his musical talents under a bushel.'*

*Police Incidents. (1831, May 30). The Sydney Herald (NSW : 1831 - 1842), p. 2.*



## *Forty Thieves*

### ALI BABA;

OR, THE  
**FORTY THIEVES,**  
 DESTROYED BY  
**MORGIANA,**  
*A SLAVE.*  
 ON WHICH IS FOUNDED  
*The New Grand Operatical Romance.*



*M. Angus and Son, Printers, Newcastle.*

There is always kept on Sale, a choice and extensive  
 Assortment of Histories, Songs, Children's Story  
 Books, School Books, &c. &c.

In London the play *Ali Baba, or, The Forty Thieves* was dramatised in 1788 by John O'Keefe for the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. The music and dances featured in such plays often became part of the popular culture. Additionally, play acting was a favoured pastime for convicts with numerous reports of this activity. Surgeon Peter Cunningham recounted this amusing anecdote about the play *The Forty Thieves* on a convict ship:



*Sometimes they [convicts] act plays with a screen of blankets for the drop-scene, getting together remnants of stolen toggery to deck out their persons with; soot, chalk, red paint, and flake white, being employed to polish off their complexions. A friend of mine (surgeon of a convict-ship), in passing across the stage as the performance was about to commence, happened to inquire the name of it: 'Oh, sir, the 'Forty Thieves.' was the response of the facetious rogue next him. 'It is well chosen then,' replied my friend, 'as you cannot be at a loss for actors.'*

*Cunningham, Peter. Royal Navy Surgeon for convict ships. 1819-1828. Two Years in New South Wales. 1827<sup>2</sup>*



## *King of the Cannibal Isles*

*The King of the Cannibals Islands* was a comic song written by A.W. Humphreys to an earlier dance tune by John Charles White. Performed in the London theatre then published in 1830, it became immensely popular both as a dance tune and as a melody for other songs. The catchy refrain obviously took hold in the colony with lyrics adapted to local needs as testified in this Police Incident from 1833:



We sailed from port the other day  
intending to land at Bot'ny Bay  
But it happened that we were swept away  
Among the Cannibal Islands!

Chorus (after each verse)  
Hokey pokey wanky fum  
How do you like your 'tatoes done?  
Give to me a mealy one.  
Said the King of the Cannibal Islands!

The King invited us up to tea  
His name was Jurika Jurika Ge,  
And we were as thick as thick could be  
Among the Cannibal Islands

Said the King, 'Will ye be my son-in-law,  
And marry the princess Wishi-waw?'  
Said I will your Majesty hold your jaw  
To the King of the Cannibal Islands

Woman pie with lady sauce  
Little boy pudding for the second course  
He swallowed them all without remorse  
The King of the Cannibal Islands!

The end of my story remains to be told,  
About that monarch so brave and bold,  
He died from eating his clergyman cold,  
The King of the Cannibal Islands!




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*They [the Indigenous people] are very quick in learning to speak English, and will repeat any sentence after you Ann Roberts, a dab at culinary preparation, wail charged by her master with continually annoying him, and quoting extracts from the times of Heliogabalus down to the King of the Cannibal Islands . in proof of her depth of research, one of her quotations of a particularly queer nature was the following :*

*'Hokey, Pokey, Wankey fum,  
How do you like your 'tatoes done?  
Give to me a mealy one,  
Says the King of the Cannibal Islands.'*

*and no persuasion, no rhetoric could erase it from the tablet of her memory, in consequence she was brought before their Worships, who sent her to study at Gordon's laboratory for two months.*

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POLICE INCIDENTS. (1833, June 10). *The Sydney Herald (NSW : 1831 - 1842)*, p. 2



## *Malbrook*

The tune *Malbrook* was composed to celebrate the great English general John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722). At the time the colony was founded, it had become a fashionable tune for dancing and was apparently well-known. It was noted as a tune which the indigenous people had quickly acquired and may have been used when the convicts and locals danced together. It is also known as *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow* and *We Won't Go Home Till Morning*.




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*They [the Indigenous people] are very quick in learning to speak English, and will repeat any sentence after you immediately, particularly any tune. When in their canoes, they keep constantly singing while they paddle along. They have the French tune of Malbrook very perfect; I have heard a dozen or twenty singing it together.*

Thompson, George, Gunner (1794). *Slavery and famine*, J. Ridgway, London

*In one of the adjoining coves resided a family of them, who were visited by large parties of the convicts of both sexes on those days in which they were not wanted for labour, where they danced and sung with apparent good humour, and received such presents as they could afford to make them...*

Collins, D. (1798). *An Account Of The English Colony In New South Wales*



## Michael Wiggins

G D<sup>7</sup>

G Em G D G Fine

A<sup>7</sup> D Em A<sup>7</sup> D

D D.C. al Fine

Michael Wiggins first appeared as the opening dance at a high society ball in London in 1809. It became extremely popular as a dance tune and was published in many collections of dances over the next ten years. Although the tune remained the unchanged, it acquired a variety of different dance figures. In the colony, four convict men used the tune to practice the last set of quadrilles.



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*MONDAY*—John McMahon, John Dixon, John Oldfield, and John Pamington, were charged with having been taken up in Kent-street, practising the last set of quadrilles with great vivacity. The only music they had to keep time to, was McMahon whistling Michael Wiggins. They marched in an orderly manner to the watch-house, and now marched equally as orderly to the stocks, where they were billeted for three hours each.

Police Incidents - McMahon. (1833, 16 May 1833). Sydney Herald (NSW : 1831 - 1842), p. 3.



## *Off She Goes*

D G A D G D A

Bm Em A D G A D

D A<sup>7</sup> D A D

D A<sup>7</sup> D A D

This tune is first noted as the opening dance at the Earl of Dorchester's 'most splendid ball' in 1803. Its popularity increased when it was used in a pantomime called *The Harlequin High Flyer, or, Off She Goes* which enjoyed great success in London in 1808. It remained a popular tune and is included in the music manuscript of convict fiddler, Alexander Laing, as well as appearing in four police reports.




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*Kate Riley, footing it away at all hours of the night, to the tune of 'Off she goes' was sent off accordingly for two months to the factory\*.*

\*The Female Factory at Parramatta

POLICE INCIDENTS. (1831, December 5). *The Sydney Herald* (NSW : 1831 - 1842), p. 3.



## *Over the Hills and Far Away*

Our 'prentice Tom may now refuse  
To wipe his scoundrel Master's Shoes,  
For now he's free to sing and play  
Over the Hills and far away.

Over the Hills and O'er the Main,  
To Flanders, Portugal and Spain,  
The queen commands and we'll obey  
Over the Hills and far away.

We all shall lead more happy lives  
By getting rid of brats and wives  
That scold and brawl both night and day –  
Over the Hills and far away.

Over the Hills and O'er the Main,  
To Flanders, Portugal and Spain,  
The queen commands and we'll obey  
Over the Hills and far away.

Courage, boys, 'tis one to ten,  
But we return all gentlemen  
While conquering colours we display,  
Over the hills and far away.

Over the Hills and O'er the Main,  
To Flanders, Portugal and Spain,  
The queen commands and we'll obey  
Over the Hills and far away.

*The Recruiting Officer* by George Farquhar was first play enacted in the colony. On 4 June 1789, little over a year after settlement, a 'party of convicts' presented the lively comedy, *The Recruiting Officer*, to celebrate the birthday of King George III. The play, a favourite of the time, was performed in 'a convict-built hut' and honoured by the presence of his excellency the Governor, Captain Arthur Phillip and an invited audience of 60 officers and dignitaries. The song *Over the Hills and Far Away* appeared in the play and it remained part of the popular culture, being described in 1829 as 'the now favourite colonial tune'.

## *Paddy Carey*

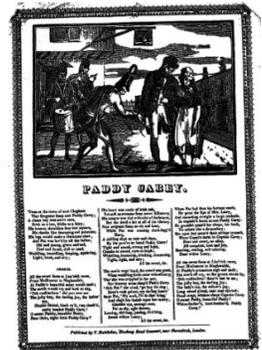
C
Dm
G7
C
G7
C

9
F
C
F
C
G7
C
F
C
G7
C

17
Dm
C
G7
C
Dm
C
G7
C

25
G7
C
G7
C
G7
C

*Paddy Carey* first appeared in Nathaniel Gow's Collection of c.1798 where it was labelled as a favourite Irish air. It became widely popular as a broadside ballad in the early 1800s and its fame increased when performed by Edward Fitzwilliam at the Drury Lane Theatre in a benefit night for the famous actor, T.P. Cooke in 1833. Its extensive popularity ensured its use as a dance tune and it was published in many country dance collections: Thompson (London, 1811), Power (Dublin, 1811), Hime (Dublin, 1814), and Wilson (London, 1816). The tune is included in the manuscript of the Tasmanian convict fiddler, and was mentioned three times in colonial Police Incidents.




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*Patrick M'Cormick, assigned to John Mackaness Esq., was brought up by his master, charged with absconding from his employment, and neglecting to attend to a horse which was placed under his charge, in consequence of which his master was put to serious inconvenience. Pat, instead of looking after the animal, was found in one of the Sheban houses on the Rocks tripping it on the light fantastic toe to the tune of 'Paddy Carey' when he was seized and put into durn a vil. The bench sent him to the tread-mill for 7 days.*

*Police Report. (1833, September 3). The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser (NSW : 1803 - 1842), p. 2.*



## *Paddy Ward's Pig*

The convict whistle player listed this tune as one used for dancing in the ‘hop shops’ in the Rocks in Sydney. The origin of Paddy Ward is unknown, however, the expression was used in a Dublin underworld poem in the 1780s and seems to refer to a lazy person. The expression ‘he lay in lavender, like Paddy Ward’s pig’ was used in a tale called the *Curse o’ Kishogue* from Samuel Lover’s collection of Irish Legends and Stories (1831).




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*Jeremiah Byrne, an itinerant, who is in the habit of splitting the ears of the groundlings at the two-penny hop shops on the Rocks, was placed at the bar, having been taken out of one of those public nuisances at a very late hour of the night. A man named Brown to whom he is assigned, denied that he had his permission to be absent from home, and the Bench accordingly called upon him to know what he had to say for himself, ‘Why may it please your Worship’ said, Jeremiah Byrne, ‘I’m a musicianer, and I plays on the flageolet, I can play, ‘Bobbing Joan’, ‘Darby Kelly’, ‘Paddy Ward’s pig’, or ‘Judy Callaghan’ with any musicianer in the country’ and thereupon Jeremiah Byrne placed his flageolet to his mouth, and struck up a tune that had well nigh inflicted the Cholera Morbus on all present. ‘Do you call that playing?’ exclaimed the constable at his elbow, snatching the instrument, ‘I’ll show you how to play you imposter. What will your Honor please to have?’ His Honor however, being perfectly satisfied with the piper’s specimen, declined hearing the indignant constable’s variations, and ordered Jeremiah Byrne, as he must be pretty well tired of piping, to dance for the next seven days.*

Police Incidents. (1831, May 30). *The Sydney Herald* (NSW : 1831 - 1842), p. 2.