



Folk Notes and Queries

by Murray Shoolbraid

Query 3 has been answered. The tune used by Arthur Scammell for his "Squid Jigging Ground" is (of course) Irish, being the first strain of a fairly well-known jig, *Larry O'Gaff*, which appears (with Irish title *Lamhras na Gabhaidh*) in Francis O'Neill's great compendium *Music of Ireland* (Chicago, 1903 and reprinted not long back), pp. 161-2, nos. 869-70: two sets, of which the first is nearer to Scammell. This is also the tune to which the Irish comic-satiric song about Daniel O'Connell is set (see in Fowke, *Traditional Singers and Songs from Ontario*, 50-1, 19).

Some other origins: As should have been noted in my article in the last issue about "Lukey's Boat," the ancestor of the tune (which I call "Q," the great-grandfather perhaps of the Canadian one) would appear to be the well-known Scottish air *Duncan Gray*, made very popular by Burns' verses; the rhythm, melodic line, and "Ha, ha" burden (in approximately the same position, notice) all point to this. Another standard Canadian piece is the ubiquitous "I'se the B'y," which I am pretty sure derives from the first strain (again) of a Scottish reel tune called *The Merry Lads of Ayr*, which has a cadence in bar two of "fa-mi" that reminds me very forcibly of the Newfoundland song. The tune is ascribed to John Riddell (1718-1795), and occurs first in the Blantyre manuscript of David Young, 1740, as *Lads of Air*; in several collections, including James Stewart-Robertson's *Athole Collection of the Dance Music of Scotland* (1884), 61.

Another tune often heard on these shores is *Mussels in the Corner*, which is otherwise known as *Molly Pickens*, or such, another Irish tune, found as *Molly Picking on the Shore* in the *Journal* of the English Folk Dance and Song Society (VI.1, December 1949, p. 19), collected from a fiddler in County Down. In Scotland, the 19th century collection of bawdry called *The Merry Muses* has a fragment going "Jenny Picken's on the shore. She has written on the door: 'Ony man a saxpence more — Whistle o'er the lave o't.'" This points to the original tune of the "Maggie Picken/Molly Picking" words, and I think on examination many would agree that the Irish-Canadian tune is in fact a refashioning of the old Scots air *Whistle o'er the Lave O't*, first published in 1759, and a great favourite in its own right ever since, particularly for the Highland step-dance "Seann triubhas," anglicised as *Shean Trews* (i.e. "Old Brecks"), under which title it occurs in many tune-books.

Query 8: William H. Talmadge of Berea College, Kentucky, wonders if the precenting of the psalms in Gaelic still continues on Cape Breton Island, and if so, if there's a recording in existence that would illustrate such singing.

Query 9: Mildred Carrigan of the Eastern Counties Regional Library (Mulgrave NS) has asked if there are other verses for "I Met Her in the Garden Where the Praties Grow" than the one printed in Carl Sandburg's *American Songbag*.

If you have comments please address them to me at PO Box 407, Ganges, BC V0S 1E0.