

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Green Peas, Mutton Pies

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1.

Green peas, mutton pies, tell me where my Maggie lies,
I'll be there before she dies, green peas, mutton pies.

Three pairs of blankets and four pairs of sheets,
One yard of cotton to mend my Johnny's breeks.

Green peas, mutton pies, tell me where my Johnny lies,
I'll be there before he dies and cuddle in his bosom.

Baby in the cradle, playing with the keys,
Maggie in the pea park, picking up peas.

2.

Green peas, mutton pies,
Tell me where my Jeanie lies,
And I'll be with her ere she rise,
And cuddle her to my bosom.

I love Jeanie over and over,
I love Jeanie amang the clover;
I love Jeanie, and Jeanie loves me,
That's the lass that I'll gang wi.

(1) Maclagan GDA (1901), 81; sung by girls in Argyll, catching hands and dancing round as hard as they can; to the tune of B O Babbity. A similar game, if game it can be called, is "Tarra Ding Ding Dido".

(2) SC (1948), 112 (no. 178); Ritchie (1964), from Edinburgh, with differs: 1.3-4 I'll be there before she dies/ To . . . in 2.2 in the clover.

Nicholson Golspie (1897), 157, has two couplets of a

line-game sequence, recited on one note, "written [by the informant] and doubtless played, as a single set."

Green peas, mutton pies,
Tell me where my Bella lies.
I love Bella, she loves me,
And that's the lass that I'll go wee. [= wi'.]

N. is confused, however, since "the first couplet reads as if Bella were supposed to be dead," which other versions of the bairns' rhyme, and the bawdy version, explain. Cf. Hecht, *Herd MSS.*, 177:

Greensleeves and pudden-pyes,
Come tell me where my true love lyes,

And I'll be wi' her ere she rise:

Fidle a' the gither!

Hey ho! and about she goes,

She's milk in her breasts, she's none in her toes,

She's a hole in her a---, you may put in your nose,

Sing: hey, boys, up go we!

Green sleeves and yellow lace,

Maids, maids, come, marry apace!

The batchelors are in a pitiful case

To fiddle a' the gither.

The tune is of course the well-known Greensleeves; See Chappell, PMOT, I.239 ff (earliest mention, 1580). The first time it appears in Playford (7th ed. 1686), it is called Green Sleeves and Pudding Pyes, one of the songs in Sportive Wit, or the Muses' Merriment, 1656. In later editions it is called Green Sleeves and Yellow Lace, from the third stanza above. Another version in MMC (1959, 64; 1964, 86), from a Burns holograph in the Huntington Library:

Green sleeves and tartan ties

Mark my true love whare she lies:

I'll be at her or she rise,
My fiddle and I thegither.

Be it by the chrystal burn,

Be it by the milkwhite thorn;

I shall rouse her in the morn,
My fiddle and I thegither.

Kinsley (no. 280), collating the Alloway and Huntington MSS; see his note, 1324-6, suggesting that while DeLauncey Ferguson assumes Burns' version is "probably traditional", it is more likely that Herd's first and third stanzas are traditional (the 2nd being an interpolation), "and that the improved version which Burns copied out twice--the Alloway MS. was for Johnson--is his own. The sexual metaphor in Herd's last line has been neatly extended to make the whole piece a double entendre of some lyrical beauty." There is also a Jacobite version, taken down by Boswell from Flora MacDonald's dictation: see Tour of the Hebrides 26 Sept. 1773; Life of

Johnston, V.259-60.

The tune mentioned in Herd 2.4 is dealt with in Chappell,
I.204; Simpson, BBBM 304 ff., etc.

See Opies Singing Game (1985),329-33.

tune: Greensleeves