

Jack Broke da Prison Door

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff is labeled 'A' and contains the first measure of the A section, with chords G, Em, Am, D, G, Em, and Am. The second staff is labeled 'B' and contains the first measure of the B section, with chords Am, G, Em, G, D, G, and Em. The third staff contains the second measure of the B section, with chords Am, D, Am, and D. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature.

"Jack Broke da Prison Door", also known as "Jack Brook da Prison" or "Johnnie Brook da Prison Door" is a Shetland reel in 4/4 time and G Major. The parts are played AABB (most versions) or AA'BB' (Martin & Hughes).

G.M. Nelson (in Anderson & Georgeson, *Da Mirrie Dancers*) relates the story behind the tune which was written by one John (Jack) Gaudie (Goudie), born in Levenwick, Shetland, in the 19th century. John was a young man of exceptional strength and a good fiddler who worked in the Sandwick copper mines. One night while ascending the mine shaft after his shift, a man above him dropped a proving hammer which struck John on the head. He survived the resulting severe concussion but developed serious neurological problems, including violent episodes. His musical abilities remained intact. Even though he was still a young man, he was acknowledged to be the best fiddler in Shetland at that particular time. Sometimes, when he visited town, he would become belligerent. On one occasion when he visited Lerwick he committed a breach of the peace and was arrested and placed in "Nicol's Hotel", or the local jail, run by an old soldier named Sergeant Nicol.

G.M. Nelson relates:

When Johnnie realized where he was his fury increased still further and during the evening, with hand and foot, for there is no record of his possessing any other implement, he broke down the door and, once outside, set course for Clickimin and thence for home as fast as he could go. Everybody was glad to see him go and no attempt was made to restrain him. Johnnie, however, when he got home attributed his escape not only to his strength but to his subtle diplomacy in avoiding the authorities after he had broken goal. This amused him greatly and as he enjoyed it to the full, he took down his fiddle and composed that lively Shetland reel entitled "Johnnie Brood da Prison Door" or "Jack Brook da Prison".

The melody is in the repertory of Shetland Fiddle Band and therefore is now widely known in the islands.

It was printed in Anderson's *Haand Me Down da Fiddle* (1979), Brody's *Fiddler's Fakebook* (1983), Cooke's *The Fiddle Tradition of the Shetland Isles* (1986), Martin & Hughes's *Ho-ro-gheallaidh* (1990) and Miller & Perron's *Irish Traditional Fiddle Music, vol. 2* (1977).

It was recorded by Tom Anderson and Aly Bain on *The Silver Bow* (1993), Aly Bain & Mike Whellans on *Aly Bain & Mike Whellans* (1975).