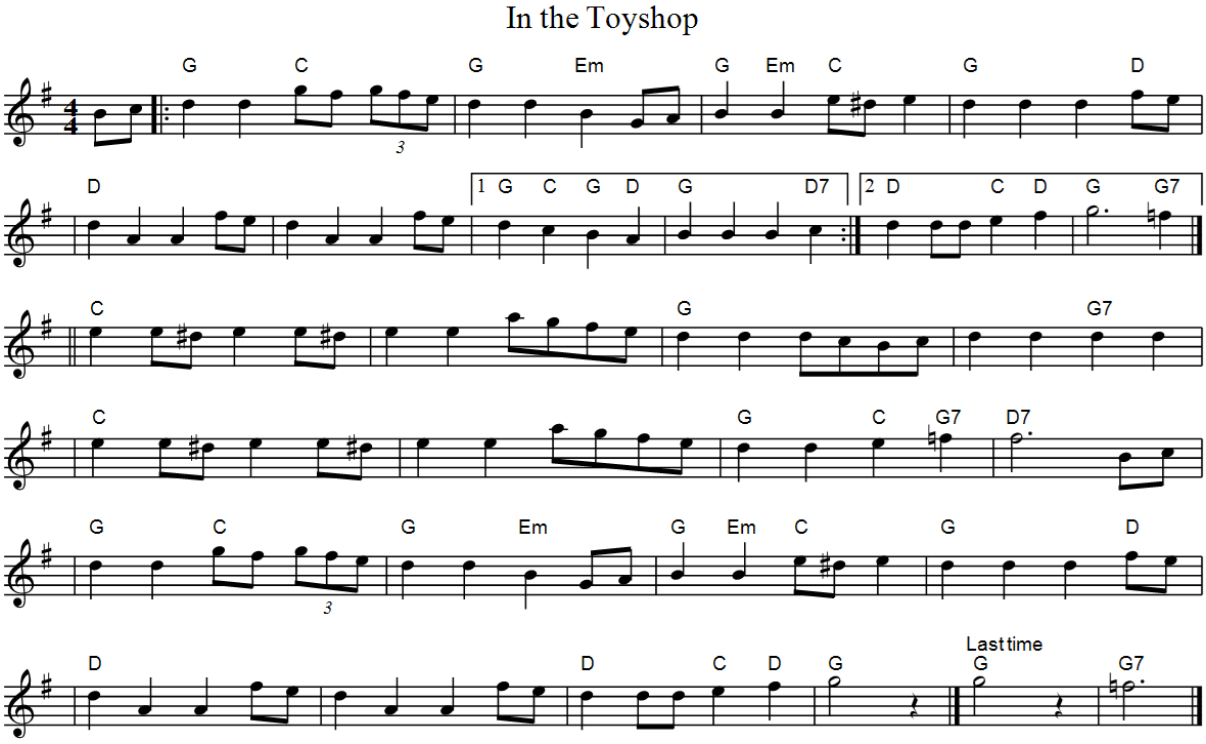
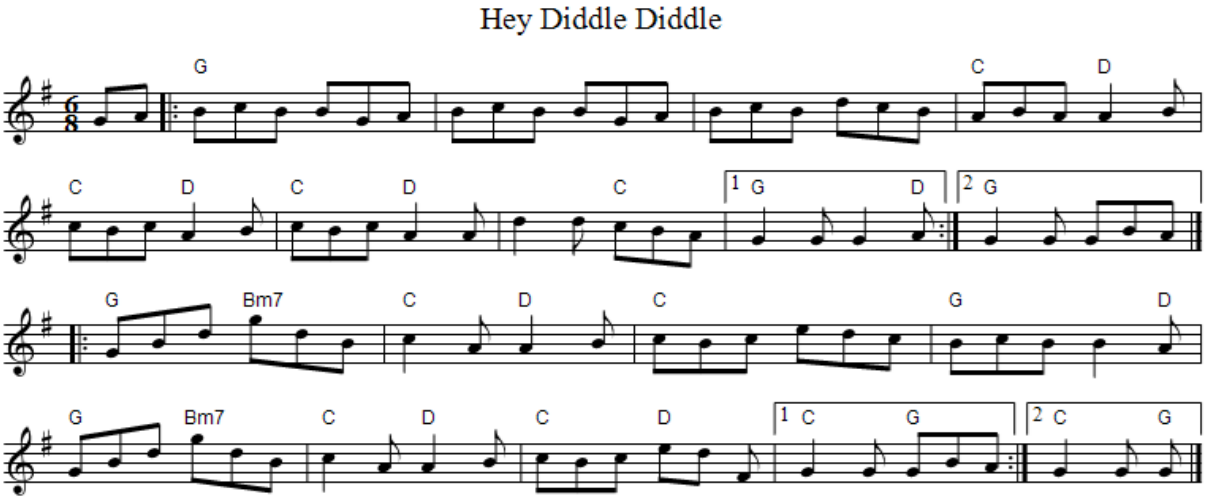
u3a tunes group meeting 3 February 2025: In the Toyshop, Hey Diddle Diddle, The Gloucester Hornpipe

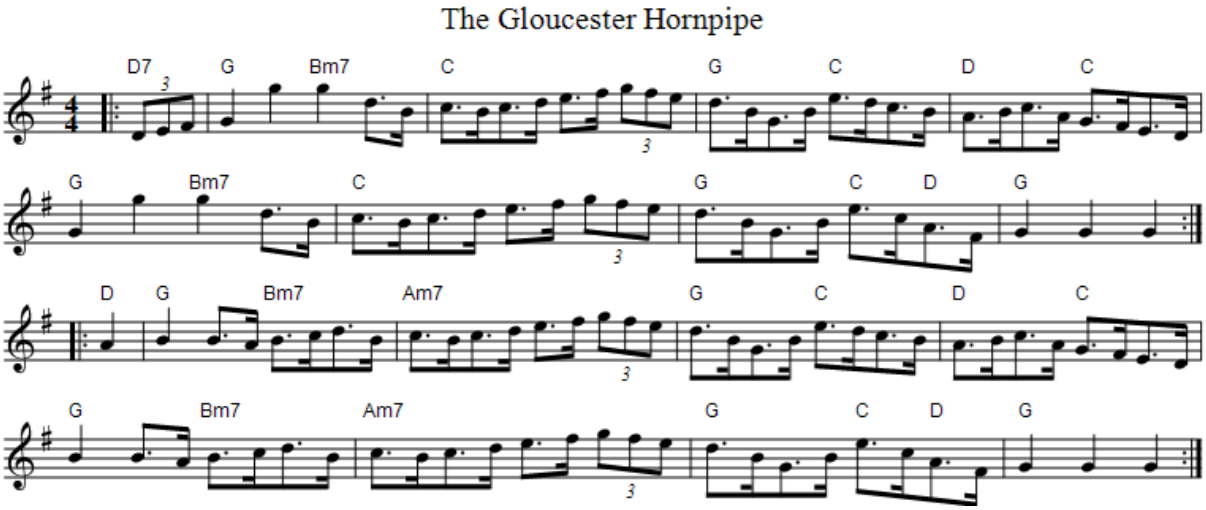


In the Toyshop is a jolly little tune that was introduced to the folk world in the 1970s by anglo concertina player Roger Edwards and his young melodeon playing friend Martin Ellison. They found it on a vinyl LP of fairground organ music, and from their playing it spread rapidly. It's fair to say it's been popular ever since.

Both Martin and Roger are still around. Martin is an acknowledged melodeon great and well worth looking up; he shares videos of his playing on Facebook.



Hey Diddle Diddle also comes from a barrel organ – this time one that played outside Ewan MacColl's boyhood home. Students of these things may notice that it's the tune of his 1930s anthem for the rambling movement, The Manchester Rambler.



This tune was played by both the influential Herefordshire fiddler Stephen Baldwin and by John Clare as The Gloucester Hornpipe, but it seems also to be known as The Liverpool Hornpipe or the Liverpool Hornpipe. Yes – the poet John Clare was also a country dance tune fiddler, as was Thomas Hardy.