Eileen Aroon Notes

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The tune with title "Ellen a Roon" is first found in Charles Coffey's ballad opera <<The Beggars Wedding>>, 1729. Coffey's song there is unrelated to "Eileen Aroon". This was acted in both Dublin and London, and at least four editions of the play were printed in that year, with additions to each subsequent edition. The music was printed at the end of the 4th edition, but not with the 1st ed. Music is in some, but not all, copies of the 2nd ed. I have not found out if the music was included with the 3rd edition. The Folger copy of the 4th. edition, 1729, contains the music, as does another copy styled the 4th ed. by different printers, in 1731. The fifth edition, 1733, by yet a different printer does not contain the music.

The second printing of the tune is that on the single sheet song with music, from Kitty Clive's singing, and the third printing of the tune seems to have been the elaborated version with a bass given by Burk Thumoth (Thomond of Burke) in <<Twelve Scotch and Twelve Iri
1744) In this work the tune is in the Irish section. This work contains an advertisement on the title page for James Oswald's <<Collection of Curious Scots Tunes>>, which is known to have appeared in November, 1742, so Thumoth's book is probably to be dated 1743-4. I subsequently discovered that the deduction of a date of 1743 was also arrived at by Francis O'Neill in <<Irish Music and Musicians>>, Chicago, 1923? Old estimates of the date ranged from 1720 to 1760.

The tune was printed in Scots collections in the eighteenth century, and this has given rise to some Scots claims to the tune, however, the Irish evidently had a song to the tune, while the Scots seemed to know only Lady Keppel's song "Robin Adair," more on which below.

The fourth and fifth printings of the tune that I have come across are those in James Oswald's <<Caledonian Pocket Companion>>, Book V, c 1753, and in his <<A Collection of Scots Tunes with Variations>>, c 1756. These were both printed by Oswald after leaving Edinburgh in 1741 o

The tune from Oswald's <<Caledonian Pocket Companion>> is reprinted in James Dick's <<The Songs of Robert Burns>>, no. 45, p. 45, 1903, as the setting for Burn's song "Phyllis the Fair."

Burns was actually familiar with the variant of the tune "Robin Adair," from a printing with music of Lady Caroline Keppel's song in a Scots songbook of the 1790's. Robert Burns, however, had met a Highland Scotsman who claimed that his mother had sung a Gaelic song to the tune. Unfortunately we do not have the title or a single line of the song, and we know that Burns was occasional misinformed, memory of far past events being notoriously error prone. I have not ascertained when the version of the tune "Robin Adair" first made its appearance. The song was by Lady Charlotte Keppel, probably between 1750 and 1760, and certainly before her marriage to her Irish "Robin" Robert Adair. The song is certainly not a Scots one.

A Cantata on the "Roast Beef of Old England" contains about 30 total verses using about a dozen differe
know when this first appeared. It is in <<The London Songster>>, 1767; <<The Humming Bird>>, London, 1776; <<The Linnets>>, Wolverhampton, 1777; and in <<The British Muse>>, Newcastle, 1787, all without music. It is with music as a single sheet with music printed by J. Longman & Co., c 1780? On the latter and the first of the books above it is styled 'A Cantata taken from a Celebrated Print by the ingenious Mr. Hogarth.'

WBO
Apr98

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