

Beginning Irish Mandolin

by Michael Gregory

Welcome to the 16th article on Beginning Irish Mandolin in this webzine! That means we've been contributing for a full three years to this point. If you haven't looked at the back issues, which go back to June 2006, I urge you to do so before you attempt the reel we're introducing here. It is quite a bit more challenging than any of our previous tunes but I think you'll profit greatly by taking the effort to learn it. It's called George White's Favourite (GWF) although it has also been called many other names. It is typical of traditional Irish session tunes to be known - in various parts of the world - by a number of quite different titles. Sometimes that number runs into the dozens! I've told you before that this is especially true of the polkas and slides of the Sliabh Luachra region in the southwest of Ireland. A couple of very interesting websites that I consult frequently are the session.org and irishtune.info. Right now, the session.org lists nearly twenty titles for GWF, although most are some variation of "George White's". [Irishtune.info](http://irishtune.info) gives about eleven titles.

To prepare yourself for the rhythm and general feeling for this tune, I suggest you spend a bit of time on the other two reels that we've presented in these pages. These are The Merry Blacksmith and The Congress. They can be found in their ornamented versions here:

<http://www.mandolinsessions.com/jun08/Gregory.html>

Even if you've already learned these tunes, a bit of review is recommended. Be sure to listen MANY TIMES to the mp3's as part of your preparation (or review).

If you take the time to search the websites I've mentioned for GWF, you'll find that it is extremely popular among session participants, authors of tunebooks, and has been recorded many times. The version that I used to transcribe can be found on a cd titled Traditional Irish Music: traditional music session from Belfast. It contains over 40 tunes played at a brisk pace by excellent musicians. I also used, particularly for the B-part, the long out-of-print tunebook, Martin Mulvihill's *First Collection of Traditional Irish Music*. However I have made this arrangement so as to be especially "mandolin friendly", in my view.

The first part of the tune is mostly straightforward, provided you're used to the ornaments I've included in measures 1,3, and 5. Follow carefully the pick directions & listen to the slower version of the mp3. In the second part (B-part) of the tune, your 4th finger is going to get a workout to reach those high b's in measures 10,12,14 and 15. Because the pinky is our weakest finger, every mandolin player spends much time on its development. I urge you to focus on that because the effort will improve your playing. Play slowly at first, taking your time (it may take many weeks or months!) to bring the tune up-to-speed. Listen to the tone of your instrument as you do this - playing slowly is the best time to hear that tone. When you fall in love with the tone of your instrument, you're motivated to play more often so again your playing improves. One word of caution: keep your playing nice and clean BEFORE you try to speed up. If you NEVER reach a fast pace, that's OK - at least you can have the satisfaction of a very good sound that pleases you. As has been said very often, SPEED KILLS. Accuracy is MUCH more important than speed.

On one of the mp3's, I'm playing GWF on my LaPlant mandolin #149, an oval soundhole A-style mandolin, built by Lloyd Laplant of Grand Rapids, Minnesota in November 2007. My wife accompanies with her Laplant guitar #76 made in 1987. The chords I've placed in the music/tab were chosen by her and are only printed here as just one example of how the tune can be accompanied. Please change them to your own tastes.

This is without a doubt the most challenging tune we've introduced in this webzine. But I am confident that each of you will profit greatly by extending yourselves. Work on it day after day without fail and you'll have a wonderful tune you'll be proud to play. Next time, I'll give you another reel to play with GWF. In the meantime, send your comments, requests and suggestions to me at michael.gregory@und.nodak.edu.

George White's Favourite

1 2 3 4

Tab: 0 2-2-2-2 0 2-5-2 | 0 5 0-2 5 2 0-2 | 5 2-2-2-2 0 2-5-2 | 0 5 0-2 0 2-5

Em D G Em D

Musical notation for measures 1-4 in treble clef, key of D major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes.

5 6 7 8 9

Tab: 0 2-2-2-2 0 2-5-2 | 0 5 0-2 5 2 0-2 | 5 0-2-5 3-0 5-2 | 0 5 0-2 2-5 | 0 5 0-2 5

Em D G Em D G D G

Musical notation for measures 5-9. Measure 9 includes first and second endings.

10 11 12 13

Tab: 3 0 5 0 3 5 7 5 | 3 3 5 3 0 5 2 | 5 3 3 3 7 3 5 3 | 0 5 5 3 5 3 5

G Em G D

Musical notation for measures 10-13. Measure 13 includes first and second endings.

14 15 16 17 18

Tab: 7 3 0 3 5 2 5 | 3 0 5 0 3 5 7 5 | 3 3 5 0 3 5 2 | 0 5 0-2 5 | 0 5 0-2 5 2-5

G Em G D G D

Musical notation for measures 14-18. Measure 18 includes first and second endings.