The activity celebrated in William’s title *Lasses Make Your Tails Todle* is global (at least), but there are many local variants of the tune, as well as its associated lyric:

**Tail Todle**

Our gudewife held o’er to Fife,
   For to buy a coal-riddle;
Lang or she came back again,
   Tammie gart my tail todle.

Tail todle, tail todle;
   Tammie gart my tail todle;
At my a—e wi’ diddle doddle,
   Tammie gart my tail todle.

When I’m dead I’m out o’ date;
   When I’m sick I’m fu’ o’ trouble;
When I’m weel I step about,
   An’ Tammie gars my tail toddle.

Jenny Jack she gae a plack,
   Helen Wallace gae a boddle,
Quo’ the bride, it’s o’er little
   For to mend a broken doddle.

from *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*, collected by Robert Burns.

**Tail Tottle**

Had I but a pint of wine,
   Had I but a brandy bottle;
Had I but a bonny lass,
   I wad make her tail tottle.

Tail tottle, tail tottle,
   [Tail tottle, tail tottle;]
Had I but a brandy bottle,
   With a bit of tail tottle.

collected by John Bell, Tyneside

The tune’s earliest sighting is in George Skene’s fiddle manuscript (Aberdeen, 1717 et seq.) with a title almost long enough to be another lyric, *Lasses gar your Tails Todle, Spread your houghs lat in the Dodle, that will gar your Tails Todle* (‘gar’ = ‘make’, ‘houghs’ = ‘thighs’). In Scotland the tune grew into a long variation set, one very fine version of which, from *Flores Musicae*, is given in our Appendix Harmonic Proportion.

The tune was also used for an unrelated Jacobite lyric, *Little wat ye wha’s coming*, also called *The Chevalier’s Muster-Roll* and, less accurately, *The Highland Muster Roll*, as its list of Jacobites includes Lowland, Border and Northumbrian names. Perhaps it is for this reason that permutations of the *Little wat ye* title accompany its distinct branching-off as a Northumbrian smallpipe tune, in which guise it underwent a modal transformation owing to the characteristics of the early smallpipe chanter. It also turns up in fiddlers’ manuscripts a little further south (Joseph Barns, Cumbria, Lawrence Leadley, Yorkshire) as *Brandy Bottle*, suggesting that a lyric similar to John Bell’s was known over a wide area.