

McPherson's Farewell

Verse

Chorus

1. Fareweel, ye dungeons dark and strong,
 Fareweel, Fareweel tae thee.
 McPherson's time will nae be lang,
 On yonder gallows tree.

Chorus:

Sae rantin'ly, sae wantonly,
 Sae dauntin'ly gaed he
 He played a tune and danced it roon',
 Below the gallows tree.

2. 'Twas by a woman's treacherous hand,
 That I was condemned to dee.
 Below a ledge at a window she stood,
 And a blanket she threw o'er me.

Chorus

3. The Laird o' Grant, that hieland saint,
 That first laid hands on me,
 He played the cause on Peter Broon,
 Tae let MacPherson free.

Chorus

4. Untie these bands frae off my hands,
 And gie to me my sword.
 There's no' a man in all Scotland,
 But I'll brave him at a word.

Chorus

5. There's some come here tae see me hanged,
 And some to buy my fiddle.
 But before I do part wi' her,
 I'll brak her thro' the middle.

Chorus

6. He took the fiddle in both of his hands,
And he broke it o'er a stone.
Says, "There's nae ither hand shall play
on thee,
When I am dead and gone."
Chorus

7. O little did my mother think,
When first she cradled me,
That I would turn a rovin' boy,
And die on the gallows tree.
Chorus

Clancy Brothers Lyrics

1. Farewell ye dungeons dark and strong,
Farewell, farewell to thee,
McPherson's life will no be long
On yonder gallows tree

Chorus

Sae rantingly, sae wantingly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he,
He played a tune and he danced around
Below the gallows tree

2. Take off these bands from off my hands
And give to me a sword
For there's not a man in all Scotland
But I'd brave him at his word
Chorus

8. The reprieve was comin' o'er the bridge o' Banf,
Tae let McPherson free,
But they pit the clock a quarter before,
And hanged him tae the tree.
Chorus

3. There's some come here for to see me hung
And some to buy my fiddle
But before that I do part with her
I'll break her through the middle
Chorus

4. He took his fiddle in both of his hands
And he broke it o'er a stone
Saying "There's nae ither hand shall play on thee
When I am dead and gone"
Chorus

5. The reprieve was coming o'er the Bridge of Banff
For to set McPherson free
But they put the clock a quarter before
And they hanged him from a tree
Chorus

"McPherson's Farewell", also known as "MacPherson's Farewell", "MacPherson's Lament" or "MacFoset's Farewell" is a Scottish air in F Major (Gow, Neil), G Major (Hardie, Johnson, McGibbon, Skinner), D Major (Lerwick) or A Major (Carlin). The parts are played AB (Skinner), AAB (Johnson), ABCD (Hardie), AABBCDD (Gow, McGibbon, Neil) or ABCDEF (Lerwick).

James MacPherson (1675–1700) was a Scottish outlaw, famed for his lament or rant, a version of which was rewritten by the Scottish poet, Robert Burns. The original version of the lament is alleged to have been written by MacPherson himself in prison on the eve of his execution. Before ultimately being brought to trial, MacPherson was captured several times but always escaped from his enemies. In Aberdeen, his cousin, Donald, and a gypsy named Peter Brown, aided by the populace, rescued him from prison. Shortly afterwards, he was again captured, but was once more rescued, this time by the Laird of Grant.

Sir Walter Scott says that MacPherson played this tune under the gallows and after playing the tune, he then offered his fiddle to anyone in his clan who would play it at his wake. When no one came forward to take the fiddle, he broke it – either across his knee or over the executioner's head – and then threw it into the crowd with the remark, "No one else shall play Jamie MacPherson's fiddle". The broken fiddle now lies in the McPherson Clan Museum near Newtonmore, Inverness-shire. He then was hanged or, according to some accounts, threw himself from the ladder, to hang by his own will. This took place on November 16, 1700.

An American tune with a similar background (but no lyrics) is "The Last of Callahan". I believe I learned it from The Clancy Brothers who sang a shorter anglicized version.

It plays easily on dulcimer, banjo and anything else you want to play it on.

It was printed in Carlin's **Master Collection** (1984), **Fiddler Magazine, vol. 8, No. 3**, (Summer 2001), Gow's **Complete Repository, Part 1** (1799), Hardie's **Caledonian Companion** (1992), Johnson's **Kitchen Musician No. 20: A Twenty Year Anniversary Collection** (2003), Lerwick's **Kilted Fiddler** (1985), McGibbon's **Collection of Scots Tunes, vol. 3** (1762), Neil's **The Scots Fiddle** (1991), Oswald's **Caledonian Pocket Companion, vol. 10** (1771), Skinner's **The Scottish Violinist** (1900) and Wright's **Compleat Collection of Celebrated Country Dances, vol. 1** (1740).

It was recorded by Theodore Bikel on **From Bondage to Freedom** (1960), The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem on **Boys Won't Leave the Girls Alone** (1962), Brian Freeman on **Songs of Robert Burns** (1999), Kingdom Folk Band on **Restless** (1997), Jimmy MacBeath on **World Library of Folk and Primitive Music: Scotland, Vol 3** (1998), Jimmy MacBeath and Davy Stewart on **101 Scottish Songs** (1962), Ewan MacColl on **Scots Street Songs** (1956), Howie Mitchell on **Mountain Dulcimer - How to Make It and Play It** (1965), Roger Nicholson on **Nonesuch for Dulcimer** (1972), North Quarry Street Irregulars on **North Quarry Street Irregulars** (197?), Simmons Family on **Ozark Mountain Dulcimer** (197?), Davie Stewart on **Heather and Glen** (1960s), Davie Stewart on **Folksongs of Britain and Ireland** (1984/1975) and John Strachan on **Songs from Aberdeenshire** (2002).