

The Banshee

"The Banshee", in Gaelic "*Bean Sidhe*", also known as "McMahon's Reel" and "The Kilcavan Banks" is an Irish reel in D mixolydian. The parts are played AABB (Flaherty, Silberberg, Songer) or AA'BB' (Harker/Rafferty).

The tune was composed by a Fermanagh fiddle and flute player named John McMahon who later moved to County Antrim, near Muckamore. In Fermanagh and many other places it is still called "McMahon's Reel" after its composer. Some sources claim that the "Banshee" title for this tune originated with the Bothy Band, while others claim that it was McMahon's original title.

A banshee is a female fae whose keening will be heard when someone is about to die. In the wee hours she is also sometimes seen washing that person's blood-stained clothes (or armor). Though all too often portrayed as an ugly hag she may also be seen as a kindly spirit who, by foretelling a death, helps family and friends prepare themselves emotionally for loss.

It was printed in Flaherty's *Trip to Sligo* (1990), Harker's *300 Tunes from Mike Rafferty* (2005), Silberberg's *Fiddle Tunes I Learned at the Tractor Tavern* (2002) and Songer's *Portland Collection* (1997).

It was recorded by The Bothy Band on *First Album* (1975), Mooncoin on *A Fathomless Sea*, Boys of the Lough on *Boys of the Lough* and The Fureys And Davey Arthur on *Banshee*.