

The Boyne Water

Em **A** G Am G

4 Am Em C G Am G

8 1. Am 2. Am **B** Em G

12 Em Am Em G

16 Am Em 1. Am Em 2. Am Em

1. July the first in Old Bridge Town, there was a grievous battle,
Where many a man lay on the ground by cannons that did rattle.
King James, he pitched his tents between the lines for to retire
But King William threw his bomb-balls in and set them all on fire.
2. Where at they vowed revenge upon King William's forces
And oft did vehemently cry that they would stop their courses.
A bullet from the Irish camp then grazed King William's arm.
They thought his Majesty was slain, yet it did him little harm.
3. Duke Schomberg then, in friendly care, his King would often caution
To shun the spot where bullets hot retained their rapid motion
But William said, he don't deserve the name of Faith's Defender
Who would not venture life and limb to make a foe surrender.
4. When we the Boyne began to cross, the enemy descended
But few of our brave men were lost, so stoutly we defended
The Horse it was that first marched o'er, the Foot soon followed after
But brave Duke Schomberg was no more by venturing o'er the water
5. When valiant Schomberg, he was slain, King William he accosted
His warlike men, for to march on and he would be foremost
Brave boys, he cried, be not dismayed for the loss of one commander
For God shall be our kin this day and I'll be general under

6. Then stoutly we the Boyne did cross to give the enemies battle.
Our cannon to our foes great cost, like thundering claps did rattle.
In majestic mien, our Prince rode o'er, his men soon followed after
With blow and shout, put our foe to the rout, the day we crossed the water.
7. The Protestants of Drogheda have reason to be thankful
That they were not to bondage brought, they being but a handful.
First to those who were brought and tried at Millmount after
But brave King William set them free by venturing o'er the water.
8. The cunning French near to Duleek had taken up their quarters
And found themselves on every side surrounded by still water
But in the dead time of the night, they set the fields on fire
And long before the morning's light, to Dublin did retire.
9. Then said King William to his men after the French departed,
"I'm glad", said he, "that none of ye seem to be faint-hearted.
So sheath your swords and rest awhile, in time we'll follow after."
These words he uttered with a smile the day he crossed the water.
10. Come, let us all with heart and voice applaud our live's defender
Who, at the Boyne, his valour showed and made for James' surrender.
To God above, the praise we'll give now and ever after
And bless the glorious memory when King William crossed the water.

"The Boyne Water" (in Gaelic "*Briseadh na Bóinne*"), also known as "As Vanquished Erin", "The Battle of the Boyne Water", "When the King came o'er the water", "Barbara Allan" (Pa.), "The Bottom of the Punch Bowl", "King William's March", "Leading the Calves/The Driving of the Calves", "Wee German Lairdie", "Wha the Deil hae We Gotten for a King?" and many other variations, is an Irish air or march in 4/4 time and A Minor (Howe), A Dorian (Breathnach, O'Neill, Perlman, Roche) or E Minor (Haverty, Joyce). The parts are played AB (most versions), AAB (Howe), AA'BB (Breathnach) or AABB (Manson). Bayard collected it from two of his sources, fiddler Sara Armstrong and fifer Hiram Horner.

The name Boyne itself is derived from the name of the goddess Boinn, literally 'cow-white', "a name well suited to a pastoral people whose wealth was chiefly in cattle" (Matthews, 1972). The name of the tune commemorates the Battle of the Boyne (named for the Boyne River in County Meath, eastern Ireland, though the battle itself was fought three miles west of Drogheda), fought July 1st, 1690, in which the English monarch King William III defeated the Irish forces under King James II. It is very popular among the Orangemen of Ulster. The ballad follows the historical accounts of the battle correctly enough. The air is well known in the south of Ireland, where it is commonly called "*Sebladh na n-gamhan*", "Leading the Calves".

A setting is given by Bunting in his second collection, the Munster and Connaught versions are given by Petrie in his *Ancient Music of Ireland*, vol. II. O'Neill (1913) lists "Boyne Water" as one of the "splendid martial airs" of Irish music. However old it actually is in oral tradition, Bayard (1991) finds the earliest printed appearances of the tune in William Graham's **Lute Book** of 1694 (as "Playing Among the Rashes") and in D'Urfey's **Pills to Purge Melancholy** (where it appears as an untitled air). The melody remained in popular usage throughout the British Isles for well over two hundred years. Robert Burns set three songs to it in Johnson's **Scots Musical Museum** and it was the vehicle for the Scots songs "The Wee Wee German Lairdie" and "Andrew and His Cuttie Gun" in Alan Ramsay's 1740 edition of the **Tea-Table Miscellany**.

One of the earliest sound recordings of this tune is by English musician John Locke, Leominster, Hereford, described as a "gipsy fiddler"; recorded by Cecil Sharp in 1909 on a cylinder machine. In Ireland, Sir Thomas Moore used the melody for his c. 1825 song "As Vanquished Erin".

The air was widespread in American usage, often heard as the tune the popular song "Barbara Allan" was sung to, as has been noted by several writers (Bayard, Cowdery, Cazden).

It was printed in Aird's **Selection of Scotch, English, Irish and Foreign Airs**, vol. 2 (1785), Bayard's **Dance to the Fiddle** (1981), Breathnach's **CRÉ 2** (1976), Davie's **Davies Caledonian Repository** (1829-30), Gow's **The Beauties of Niel Gow** (1819), P.M. Haverty's **One Hundred Irish Airs**, vol. 1 (1858) (as "Cavalcade of the Boyne"), Howe's **Complete Preceptor for the Accordeon** (c. 1843), Jordan's **Whistle and Sing!** (1975), Joyce's **Old Irish Folk Music and Songs** (1909), R.M. Levey's **Dance Music of Ireland, 1st Collection** (1858), Manson's **Hamilton's Universal Tune-Book**, vol. 1 (1844), O'Neill's **Music of Ireland: 1850 Melodies** (1903), O'Neill's **O'Neill's Irish Music** (1915), Perlman's **The Fiddle Music of Prince Edward Island** (1996) and Roche's **Collection of Traditional Irish Music**, vol. 1 (1912).