

Elsie Marly



"Elsie Marley", also known as "Alce Marly", "Ailsey Marly", "Alcy Marly" or "Elsie Marly" is a Scottish and English jig and song in G Mixolydian (Bremner, Callaghan, Raven, Vickers, Williamson or E Flat Mixolydian (Bruce & Stokoe). The parts are played AB (Raven, Bruce & Stokoe), AABBC (Callaghan, Gow, Johnson), AABBCDD (Bremner) or one part (Williamson). Elsie (or Alice) Marley was the wife of an innkeeper at the Barley Mow Inn, Picktree, near Chester-le-Street, just south of Newcastle upon Tyne. When Joseph Ritson published his **Bishopric Garland** in 1784, he included it in that collection.

In Sykes Local Records August 5, 1768:

The well-known Alice Marley, who kept a public house at Picktree, near Chester-le-Street, being in a fever, got out of her house and went into a field, where there was an old coal pit full of water, which she fell into and was drowned.

Elsie Marley's pub was at Barley Mow, which is between Chester-le-Street (just across the border from Northumberland, in County Durham) and Birtley. It may have been called The Wheatsheaf, and indeed, a pub (though not the original) by that name is there today in which occasional ceilidhs are held.

The tune is mentioned in the Northumbrian pit mining song "Byker Hill" in the lines:

Geordie Charleton, he had a pig,
He hit it with a shovel and it danced a jig;
All the the way to Walker Shores,
To the tune of 'Elsie Marley'.

The banjo tab is from Ken Perlman's book *New England and Irish Fiddle Tunes for Clawhammer Banjo* (1980). Ken's thinking is that there is no good reason for not playing any kind of tune on the banjo. His Banjo Camp classes covering jigs (6/8), slip jigs (9/8) and slides (12/8) are always fun. It was printed in Bremner's **A Collection of Scots Reels** (1757), Bruce & Stokoe's **Northumbrian Minstrelsy** (1882), Callaghan's **Hardcore English** (2007), Gow's **Complete Repository Part 4** (1817), Johnson's **The Kitchen Musician No. 10: Airs and Melodies of Scotland's Past** (1992) (revised 2001), **Northumbrian Pipers Tunebook** (2nd ed. 1970), Petrie's **Fourth Collection of Strathspey, Reels, Jiggs and Country Dances** (1796), Raven's **English Country Dance Tunes** (1984), Seattle's **Great Northern/William Vickers** (1987) and Williamson's **English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish Fiddle Tunes** (1976).

It was recorded by Florida on **Hardcore English** (2007) and **Florida**, Tom Clough (1929) and Bonnie Rideout on **Scottish Fire** (2000).