

The Keel Row

The musical score for "The Keel Row" is written in A major (two sharps) and 2/2 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and a boxed letter 'A' above the first measure. The second staff starts at measure 4 and includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) with a boxed letter 'B' above the final measure. The third staff starts at measure 7 and includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). The fourth staff starts at measure 10 and includes a second ending (2.).

Chords indicated in the score: A, E7, A, E7, A, E7, A, E7, A, D, A, E7, A, D, A, E7, A.

"The Keel Row" also known as "Merry may the Keel Row", "The Bagpipe", "The Boatie Rows", "Drops of Brandy", "Johnny When You Die", "Lake St. Jean Gallope", "Michael's Reel", "Smiling Polly" or "Twin Sisters" is an English, Irish, Scottish and American air or reel, schottische or Highland Fling known in England, Northumberland, Ireland and America in G Major (Bell, Buttery, Cole, Hall & Stafford, Kennedy, Kidson, Raven, Stokoe, Sweet, Trim, Tubridy, White), A Major (Athole, Cocks, Kerr, Mulvihill, Roche, Sureenne) or D Major (Balmoral). The parts are played AB (Raven, Roche, Sureenne, Tubridy), AABB (Balmoral, Bell, Cocks, Cole, Kerr, Kidson, Mulvihill, Sweet, Trim, White), AABB' (Athole), ABC (Stokoe).

The 'keel' is a vessel which is only known on the rivers Tyne and Wear. The 'row' in Keel Row refers to the large oar used by keelmen when faced with poor wind or an adverse tide.

Bayard (1981) dates the tune from the 18th century, while Chappell (1859) finds the earliest form of it in Thompson's **200 Country Dances** of 1765 where it appears as "Smiling Polly," though Kidson (1890) believes the earliest form of the tune to be "Yorkshire Lad," found in Johnson's **Country Dances** of 1748.

"The Keel Row" has been arranged by classical composers Claude Debussy and Eric Satie.

It was printed in Bayard's **Dance to the Fiddle** (1981), Chappell's **Popular Music of the Olden Time, vol. 2** (1859), Cocks' **Tutor for the Northumbrian Half-Long Bagpipes** (1925), Cole's **1000 Fiddle Tunes** (1940), Ford's **Traditional Music in America** (1940)(appears as "Twin Sisters"), Gow's **Vocal Melodies of Scotland** (1822), William Gunn's **The Caledonian Repository of Music Adapted for the Bagpipes** (1848)(appears as "*A Bhalgun, a Bhalgun*"/The Bagpipe"), Hall & Stafford's **Charlton Memorial Tune Book** (1974), Jarman's **Old Time Fiddlin' Tunes** (1951), Kennedy's **Fiddlers Tune Book, vol. 1** (1951), Kerr's **Merry Melodies, vol. 1** (c. 1880), Kidson's **Old English Country Dances** (1890), Köhlers' **Violin Repository, part 3** (1885), J. Kenyon Lees' **Balmoral Reel Book** (c. 1910), Mulvihill's **1st Collection** (1986), Raven's **English Country Dance Tunes** (1984), Roche's **Collection of Traditional Irish Music, vol. 1** (1912), Ryan's **Mammoth Collection** (1883), Saar's **Fifty Country Dances** (1932), Smith's **Scottish Minstrel, vol. 5** (1820-24), Stewart-Robertson's **The Athole Collection** (1884), Stokoe & Bruce's **Nortumbrian Minstrelsy** (1882), Sureenne's **Dance Music of Scotland** (1852), Sweet's **Fifer's Delight** (1964/1981), Tubridy's **Irish Traditional Music, vol. 1** (1999), White's **Excelsior Collection** (1907) and White's **Unique Collection** (1896).

It was recorded Patrick J. Scanlon, Billy Cooper, Walter & Daisy Bulwer on **English Country Music** (2000).