

## Finlay's Lament

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There are settings of this tune in the following manuscript sources:

- **Donald MacDonald snr's** MS, ff.88-93;
- **Donald MacDonald jnr's** MS, f.36;
- **Angus MacKay's** MS, ii, 27-28;
- **John MacKay's** MS, ff.1-3;
- **Colin Cameron's** MS, f.96;
- **D. S. MacDonald's** MS, ii, 89-91;
- **John MacDougall Gillies's** MS, f.35;
- **David Glen's** MS, ff.146-148 and again at ff.168-169;

and in the following published sources:

- **C. S. Thomason**, *Ceol Mor*, p.80;
- **David Glen**, *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.190-191;
- **G. F. Ross**, *Some Piobaireachd Studies*, p.33.

**Donald MacDonald** sets the tune as follows:



89

This image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for pipes and drums. The page is numbered '89' in the top right corner. The notation consists of ten staves of music, each containing a complex, rhythmic melody. The notes are written in a style characteristic of traditional Scottish pipe music, with many beamed notes and intricate patterns. The paper appears to be aged and slightly yellowed, with some visible creases and a horizontal fold line across the middle of the page.

90

A page of handwritten musical notation for pipes and drums, numbered 91 in the top right corner. The score consists of 12 staves of music, each containing a complex, rhythmic melody. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings, characteristic of traditional Scottish pipe and drum music. The paper shows signs of age and use, with some ink bleed-through and slight discoloration.





As it stands MacDonald's score does not square with modern ideas of "regularity". The variations seem in order, but the ground looks as if it is a bar short in the final line. MacDonald's barring may have been inserted by a later hand; possibly the time signature as well.

**Donald MacDonald jnr.**'s score seems to have a similar structural pattern to his father's, but it is in outline only and is not reproduced here.

**Angus MacKay** sets the tune like this:

27

*Cumha Thionnla*

*Finlay's Lament - \* same*

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for two tunes. The first tune is 'Cumha Thionnla' and the second is 'Finlay's Lament - \* same'. The notation is written on ten staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 12-measure rest. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. There are several 'trill' markings above notes. The piece is divided into sections: 'var- 1st.' (first variation) and 'Doubbling' (second variation). The 'Doubbling' section includes a '2nd' marking and a '3rd time' marking. The notation is dense and characteristic of traditional Scottish pipe music.

28

*Cromm - la ath.*

*1st time*

*2nd*

*D. G. Thomas.*

*Doubling.*

*1st time*

*2nd*

*D. G. Thomas D. G. Thomas*

There are structural issues with MacKay's score likewise. Although the results are musically pleasing the ground has fourteen rather than the expected sixteen bars in lines two and three.

Various solutions to these difficulties have been proposed by later editors as we shall see below.

**Donald MacKay** sets the tune in exactly the same way as his brother, Angus, and his score is therefore not reproduced here.

**Colin Cameron's** score is seriously incomplete, his account of the tune ending at bar six of the ground. It is not reproduced here.

**D. S. MacDonald's** score is close to its source, Angus MacKay's MS, and since it does not add to the expressive possibilities of the tune is not reproduced here.

**John MacDougall Gillies** sets the tune like this:

35

Gairluath

to be played before the last two Bars

Doubly & Cruinluath off Gairluath  
you are welcome to the Fiddlers  
24<sup>th</sup> Oct 1854 Lammie

Here we see again the 8: 14 pattern that we saw in MacKay. However, Gillies's score is interesting in showing the relatively light emphasis continuing to be given to the opening low G until late into the Victorian period – unlike the square low G/lowA opening crotchets of *The Piobaireachd Society Collection* (second series, i, 28-30) edited by Archibald Campbell and J. P. Grant.

**David Glen** has settings of this tune in his manuscript and published book. The published version is as follows:

# A LAMENT FOR GREAT FINDLAY.

CUMHA FHIONNLAIH MHOIR.

Ùrlar.

80.

Var. 1<sup>st</sup> Taor-luath.

Doubling of Var. 1<sup>st</sup> Dùblachadh an Taor-luath.

Written. Played.



Var. 2<sup>nd</sup> Crùn-luath.

Repeat Urlar.



Doubling of Var. 2<sup>nd</sup> Dùblachadh an Chrùn-luath.



Repeat Urlar.

David Glen brings lines two and three of the tune into line with contemporary ideas of "regularity" by repeating the penultimate phrase in line three of the ground, and adjusting the taorluath and crunluath variations to take account of this. It is a plausible reading and respects the antiphonal nature of the tune.

**C. S. Thomason** in *Ceol Mor* finds a slightly different solution to the problem, basing his ground on that of Donald MacDonald and also acknowledging input from Angus MacKay's

nephew, Donald MacKay, adding material to bring up line three to a "correct" length and then squaring the variations to follow this pattern. Thomason sets the tune as follows:

80. L. FINLAYS LAMENT.  
1, 4, 7, G

2T. 6C. 3T. 6C.

In his book, *Some Piobaireachd Studies*, **G. F. Ross** produces a detailed analysis of the structural deficiencies, as he sees them, in the settings of Donald MacDonald, Angus MacKay and David Glen. This interestingly shows the kind of reasoning that editors like Glen and Thomason may have brought to bear in producing their emendations:

**LAMENT FOR FINLAY MUR.**

The above is an Analysis of three versions of the last line of this tune—Donald MacDonald's, Angus MacKay's and Glen's, the latter being MacKay's version with two bars added. The tune is clearly of 9/8 metre, but MacDonald has only seven bars in the last line of his Ground as against eight in his Taorluath. MacKay has only six bars, both in Ground and Taorluath. Glen's version has eight bars in both Ground and Taorluath, but his additions are open to question.

Before dealing with the completion or correction of the last line it is necessary to point out that in all versions there is something incorrect in the seventh bar of the Second line. In this position other bar finishes this way, and the only other possible place, other than the even numbered bars, where such a two-note beat is permissible, would be in the fifth bar of the last line, for the reason it is not unusual to find changes of such a kind in the third quarter of a part, especially the last part. Musically, the second half of the seventh bar would seem to require D and the following is probably the correct beat, which it will be noticed, agrees the last half of the seventh bar of the other lines. It might be remarked that in MacDonald's version the first half of this seventh bar would be better if made the same as MacKay's. Perhaps the error in the last half is responsible for MacDonald's first half! Regarding the singing of Taorluath, this should, of course, consist of two regular Taorluath beats, E and D.

Coming now to the completion or revision of the last line, attention is drawn to the following points in the analysis. It seems clear that in all versions there is a missing bar after the first two, (and remarks as to even numbered bars ending with a two-note beat). Division 3 is therefore left blank as regards the Ground bars. Placing MacKay's version under MacDonald's (which is complete in MacKay (Divisions 3 and 6). It also seems clear that MacKay's Taorluath bars are correctly placed in the analysis, for his third bar to take fourth place would require to end in a two-note beat. On the other hand his fifth bar is placed in Division 6 because it does not fit the Ground in Division 8. In Division 6 it requires to be amended to end with a two-note beat. Glen inserts two bars (Divisions 6 and 7). That in Division 7 is clearly excess, for his third bar really takes fourth place and in that position agrees similar bars in the other lines.

The following suggestions for completing and correcting the versions are offered—

MACDONALD. Division 3. This seems musically correct and agrees with the Taorluath bar.

MACKAY. Division 3. The first suggestion is— This fits the Taorluath and is musically correct and, moreover, is a play upon the similar bar in the first line.

Other suggestions are—

These seem musically correct but do not fit the Taorluath.

For Division 6, which should end in a two-note beat, the following would agree the Taorluath (the last half bar of which should be the same as the Ground) and would be musically correct—

The following would be musically correct also—

(the latter as in Glen's version), but would not agree the Taorluath based on C and E.

The Taorluath for Division 3 should consist of E and D beats, to agree the Ground, as the similar bar in the First Line.

GLEN. This version, as already indicated, is MacKay's with two bars added (Divisions 6 and 7). For reasons already stated we cannot place Glen's third bar in the third place and it is consequently clear his sixth bar (Division 7) is wrongly inserted. His fifth bar in sixth place is musically correct but does not agree MacKay's Taorluath (Division 6) which Glen places as the seventh bar (Division 8).

6.P.N. 17.

*Commentary:*

Malcolm MacInnes criticised the Piobaireachd Society's setting of "Finlay's Lament" in a letter to the *Oban Times* in 1937. Discussing the differences between the authorities on the length of the various sections of the tune, he criticised the Society for typically failing to resolve this.

This tune is also an example of the most surprising thing in the structure of pibroch – the shortness of the third of the three sections. In most of the tunes where this shortness exists the authorities are in agreement; but here they differ, some being two bars short in the ground and all variations; some one short in the ground and full in the variations, and some two short in the ground and full in the variations. Glen's book without giving authority has the full number of bars throughout.

What is the conclusion? The P.S., as usual, draws none. It does not even pronounce an opinion as to which is the best style of this tune. ("Piobaireachd Society Publications", *Oban Times*, 30/1/1937, p.3).

In his "Historic, Biographic and Legendary Notes to the Tunes" appended to David Glen's *Ancient Piobaireachd*, Henry Whyte ("Fionn") gives the historical background to the tune:

The progenitor of the Farquharsons was Farquhar, fourth son of Alexander Ciar, the third Shaw of Rothiemurchas. Taking up their residence in Aberdeenshire, the descendants of this Farquhar were called Farquharsons. In their early history the name of Farquhar's descendant, Findlay Mór, Standard-Bearer at Pinkie, when he fell, 1547, stands

prominent, and from and after him the Farquharsons were termed "*Clann Fhionnlaidh*," or descendants of Findlay.

Through the kindness of Miss Farquharson of Invercauld I am enabled to give the following interesting references to this brave Highlander "*Fhionnlaidh Mór*" - Big Findlay: -

**Quotation from Lyon King-at-Arms.** - I testify and make known that the Coat-of-Arms appertaining and belonging to John Farquharson of Invercauld, lawfully descended of Shaw, son of M'Duff, Thane of Fife, whose successors had the name of Shaw, son of Shaw of Rothiemurchas, chief of the whole name, came to be called Farquharson about ten generations ago, and approved of and confirmed by me to him, is matriculate in my said publick Register upon the day and date of these presents. Two Coats quarterly, First and Fourth, or a Lyon rampant, Gules armed and Languid Agies, as the paternal Coat by name Farquharson Shaw or M'Duff; Second and Third Argent; a Fir Tree growing out of a mount in base, keded proper on a chief Gule; a *Banner of Scotland* displayed as a canton of the first charged with a dexter hand coupé at the wrist fessways holding a dagger point downwards of the chief. The same having the Fir Tree for their sign and badge in time of battell. The banner from Findlay Mór of Invercauld, one of their predecessors being killed at Pinkie Field bearing the Royal Banner, and who lyes buried in the Churchyard of Inveresk . . . I have subscribed this extract and cause, append my seal . . . the fifteenth day of July 1696.

(Signed) ALEX. ARESKIN, *Lyon*.

Findlay Mór married Beatrice, daughter of Gordon of Banchory, who afterwards married Robertson of Lude. Tradition asserts she played the harp before Queen Mary. (A Lament for Great Findlay Cumha Fhionnlaidh Mhóir p.18)

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The Battle of Pinkie at which big Finlay fell occurred in September 1547. The Scots were heavily defeated by an invading English army during the latest phase of the long-continuing great power rivalry of England and France in which Scotland was frequently embroiled as a client of the French. The Scots annals richly illustrate the dangers to small strategically-placed states of living in the purlieu of contending superpowers. Pinkie lies in East Lothian, in the neighbourhood of Musselburgh, on the normal invasion route from the south.

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