

The MacKays' Banner

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

- **Colin Campbell's** "Nether Lorn Canntaireachd," i, 22-44;
- **Donald MacDonald's** MS, ff.201-6;
- **Peter Reid's** MS, f.34;
- **Donald MacDonald jnr.'s** MS, f.4;
- **Robert Meldrum's** MS, ff.50-53;

and in the following published sources:

- **Angus MacKay's** *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.119-21;
- **Donald MacPhee's** *Collection of Piobaireachd*, ii, 20-22;
- **C. S. Thomason's** *Ceol Mor*, pp.121-2;
- **David Glen's** *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.84-5;
- **John McLennan**, *The Piobaireachd as performed in the Highlands*, p.5.

Colin Campbell sets the tune as follows:

1st. Hiharinodin hihodaro, do, ho Twice Over himhinhodin hidrodintro,
2d. Hiharinodin hodaro, do, ho himhinhodin hidrodinodin himhinhodin
hidrodintro
3d. Hiharinodin hodaro, do, ho himhin,drehodin hidrodintro

D 1st. Hiharinodin hodaro, do, ho Twice Over himhin hodin Ievehohio
2d. Hiharinodin hodaro, do, ho himhin hodin Ievehoeo himhin hodin
Ievehohio
3d. Hiharinodin hodaro, do, ho himhin hodin Ievehohio

DD 1st. Hiharinodin hodarohodin, Twice Over himhin hodin
hidrodinodin
2d. Hiharinodin hodarohodin, himhinodin, hidrodinodin Twice Over
3d. Hiharinodin hodarohodin himhin hodin hidrodinodin

S the ffirst Motion

1st. Hinen hioen hoeohoehoen, Twice Over, himen, hoen hioeoehioen [etc.]

D 1st. Hinen hioen hoen hoen Twice Over himen hoen hioen hioen [etc]

DD. 1st. Hinen hiohio hoho hoho Twice Over, himen hoho hiohio [etc]

S Taolive

1st. Hindarid hidarid hoaoeohodin Twice Over himdarid hidarid hioaoeo
hidin [etc]

D 1st. Hindarid hiodarid hoaoeohodarid Twice Over himdarid hodarid
hioaoeo hiodarid [etc]

DD 1st. Hindarid hiodarid hodarid hodarid Twice Over himdarid hodarid
hiodarid hiodarid [etc]

DDD 1st. Hindarid hiodarid hiodarid hodarid three times Twice Over
himdarid hodarid hiodarid three times

2d. Hindarid hiodarid hiodarid hodarid three times himdarid hodarid
hodarid hiodarid, three times Twice Over

3d. Hindarid hiodarid hiodarid hodarid three times
himdarid hodarid [hodarid] hiodarid three times

There follows a crunluath (singling, doubling, trebling, quadrupling) on the pattern of the taorluath above, including an a mach which follows the extravagant taorluath quadrupling above. The expansiveness of this latter movement is echoed elsewhere in Colin Mor Campbell's settings where certain figures are picked up and elaborated, unexpectedly increasing the range or length of the tone row. For further examples, see his treatment of "The Rout of Glenfruin" (i, 27-9) and "The Blind Piper's Obstinacy" (ii, 166-8, with the title "Cor beg mhic Leain").

The A phrase of **Donald MacDonald**'s "White Flag" is very close to the version in the Nether Lorn, thereafter the melodies diverge. The leading stylistic features of MacDonald's score are as follows:

pipes | drums

'The White Flag', ground. Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6)



'The White Flag', Thumb Variation, lines 1-2, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6)



'The White Flag', Thumb Variation Doubling, line 1, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6)



pipes | drums

'The White Flag', siubhal singling, line 1-2, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6)

Musical notation for 'The White Flag' in siubhal singling, line 1-2, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6). The notation is in 2/4 time, treble clef, and consists of two staves of music. The music features a repetitive pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some grace notes and slurs. The notation is in black ink on white paper.

'The White Flag', siubhal doubling, line 1-2, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6)

Musical notation for 'The White Flag' in siubhal doubling, line 1-2, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6). The notation is in 2/4 time, treble clef, and consists of two staves of music. The music features a repetitive pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, similar to the singling version but with slight variations. The notation is in black ink on white paper.

'The White Flag', taorluath singling, line 1, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6)

Musical notation for 'The White Flag' in taorluath singling, line 1, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6). The notation is in 6/8 time, treble clef, and consists of one staff of music. The music features a repetitive pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a different rhythmic feel than the previous versions. The notation is in black ink on white paper.

'The White Flag', taorluath doubling, line 1, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6)

Musical notation for 'The White Flag' in taorluath doubling, line 1, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6). The notation is in 6/8 time, treble clef, and consists of one staff of music. The music features a repetitive pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, similar to the taorluath singling version. The notation is in black ink on white paper.

'The White Flag', taorluath trebling, line 1, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6)

Musical notation for 'The White Flag' in taorluath trebling, line 1, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6). The notation is in 6/8 time, treble clef, and consists of one staff of music. The music features a repetitive pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a more complex rhythmic structure than the previous versions. The notation is in black ink on white paper.

pipes | drums

'The White Flag', crunluath singling, line 1, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6)



'The White Flag', crunluath doubling, line 1, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6)



'The White Flag', crunluath trebling, line 1, Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6)

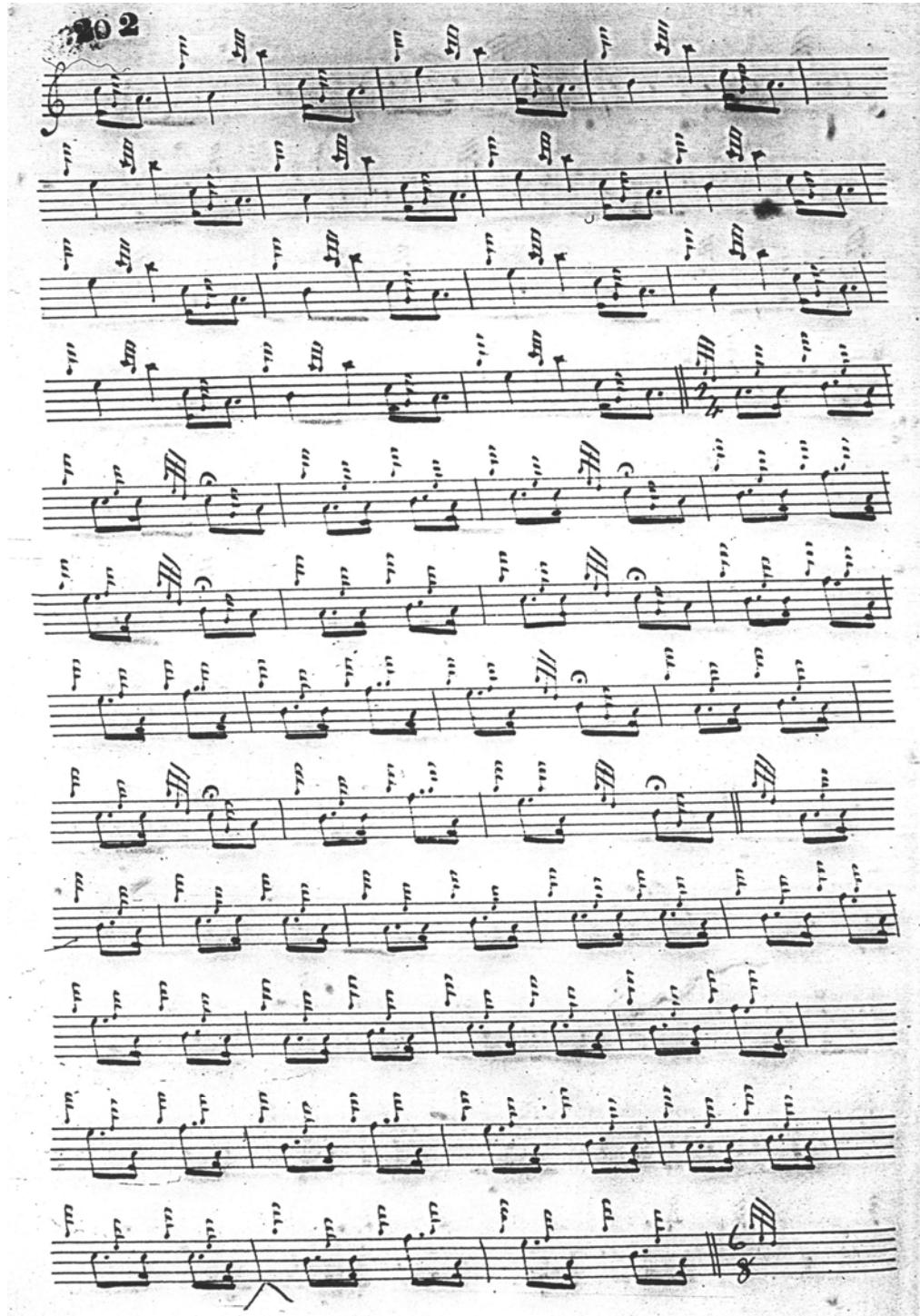


Donald MacDonald's complete score is as follows:

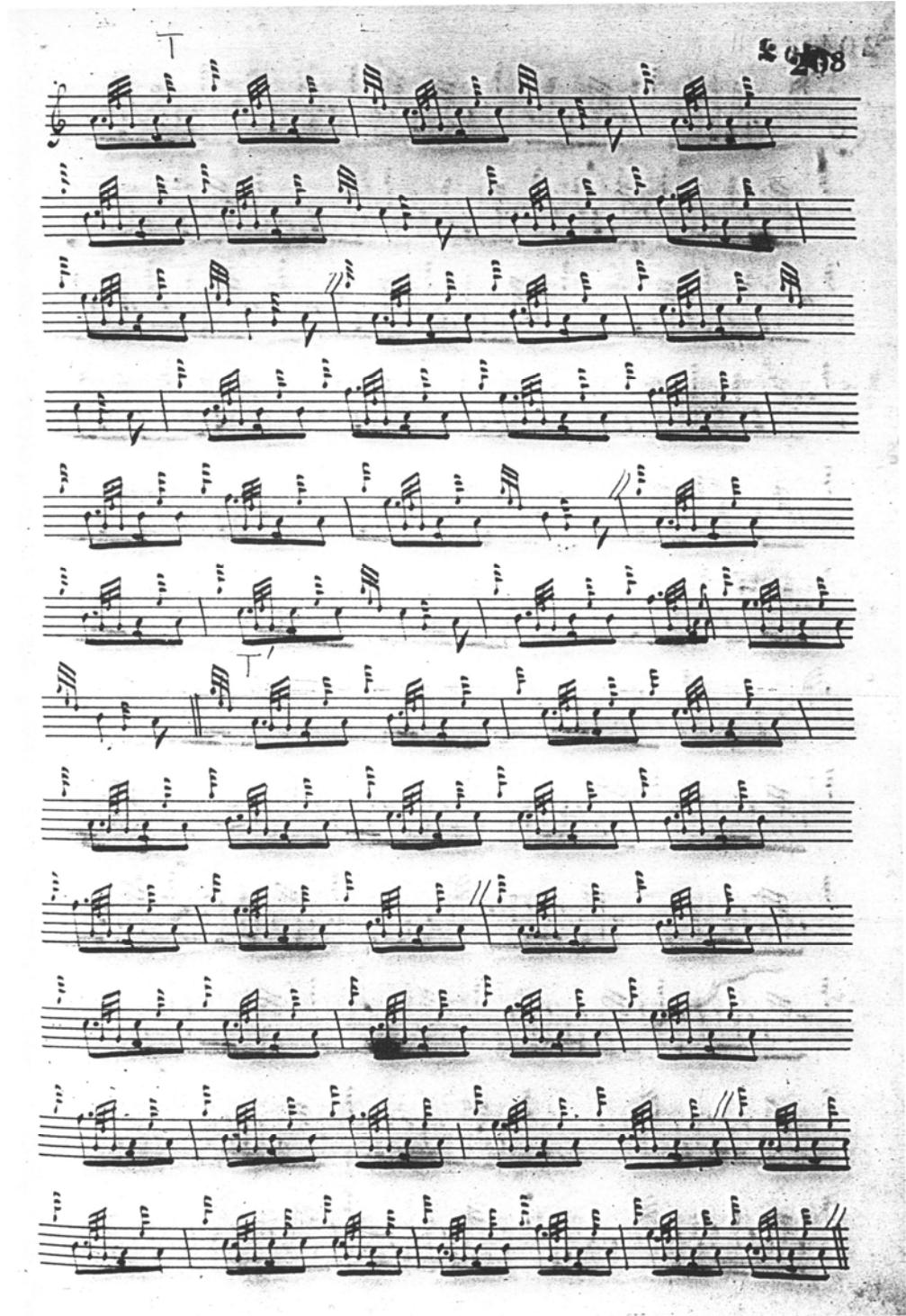
pipes | drums



pipes | drums



pipes | drums



pipes | drums



pipes | drums

A handwritten musical score for pipes and drums, consisting of ten staves of music. The music is written in common time, with various note heads and stems. Measure numbers 205 and 206 are visible at the top right. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'f' (fortissimo) and 'ff' (fortississimo). Measures 205 and 206 begin with a section labeled 'C', followed by a repeat sign and a section labeled 'C''.



MacDonald's neat and shapely arrangement shows many features typical of his style, including frequent use of reflexive cuttings in the ground, varied timings of double echo beats (three different styles in the ground alone), and the emphasis on the first pulse of a mach beats. MacDonald here times the introductory gesture on A as two even quavers followed by an A crotchet, perhaps implying a fairly staccato effect.

This forms an interesting contrast to the style of **Peter Reid**, who in general tends to accentuate the first quaver of his echo beat groups on A, B and E. Reid introduces interesting rhythmical diversity in his thumb variation as well, in a style which is much less square than MacDonald and may possibly be preferred. The absence of cadencing also gives Reid's phrase endings a pleasantly uncluttered effect:

pipes | drums

'The MacKay's White Flag', Peter Reid's MS (f.34)



'The MacKay's White Flag', First Variation, Peter Reid's MS (f.34)



'The MacKays White Flag', doubling of 1st Variation, Peter Reid's MS (f.34)



Thereafter the tune appears to be envisaged developing in accordance with the pattern illustrated by MacDonald. Reid's score stops at the end of the siubhal singling which establishes the pattern for the later variations with the words 'Doubling of 2d Variation, then, Taorluidh, Creanluidh &c.'

Peter Reid's complete score is as follows:



Donald MacDonald jnr.'s score is an outline sketch merely, containing a partially graced ground and first variation singling. It seems very similar in intention to his father's and is not reproduced here.

Robert Meldrum's score does not add to the stylistic possibilities of the tune, and is not reproduced here.

pipes | drums

The earliest of the published settings is that of Angus MacKay in Ancient Piobaireachd (pp.119-121). The following examples give an idea of his characteristic timings:

'The Mackay's Banner', ground, Angus MacKay, Ancient Piobaireachd, pp.(119-21)

A musical score for a bagpipe part, consisting of four staves of music. The music is in common time with a treble clef. The notation uses various note heads and stems, with some notes having vertical dashes through them, indicating specific timing or attack patterns. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines.

'The Mackay's Banner', thumb variation singling, line 1, Angus MacKay's Ancient Piobaireachd, (pp.119-21)

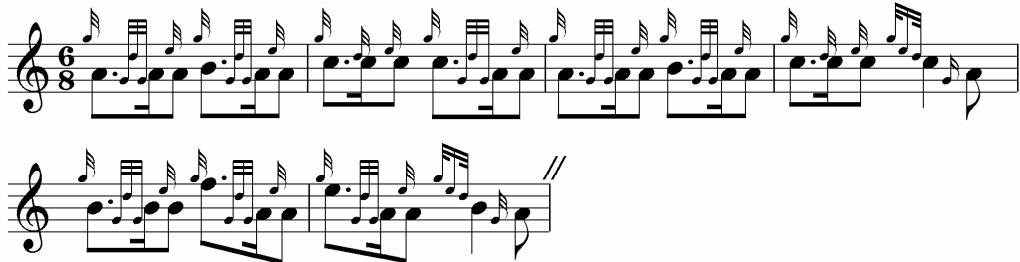
A musical score for a bagpipe part, consisting of two staves of music. The music is in common time with a treble clef. The notation uses various note heads and stems, with some notes having vertical dashes through them. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. A double slash at the end of the second staff indicates a repeat or continuation.

'The Mackay's Banner', thumb variation doubling, line 1, Angus MacKay's Ancient Piobaireachd, (pp.119-21)

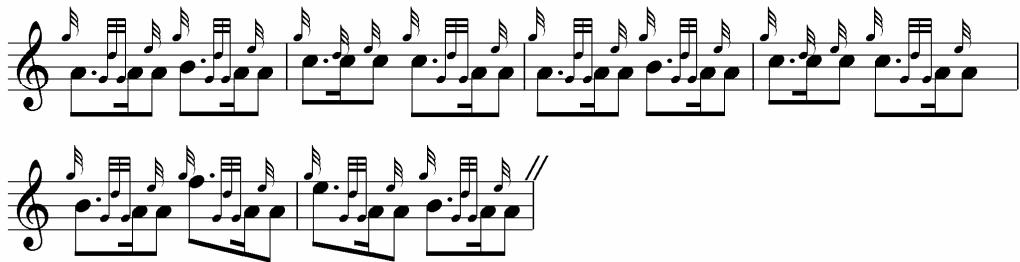
A musical score for a bagpipe part, consisting of two staves of music. The music is in common time with a treble clef. The notation uses various note heads and stems, with some notes having vertical dashes through them. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. A double slash at the end of the second staff indicates a repeat or continuation.

pipes | drums

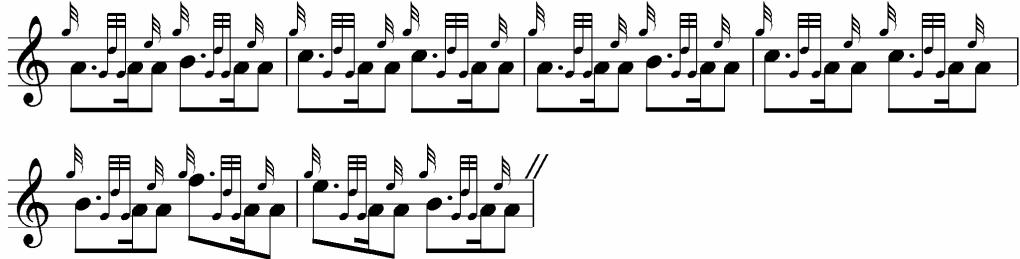
'The Mackay's Banner', taorluath singling, line 1, Angus MacKay's Ancient Piobaireachd, (pp.119-21)



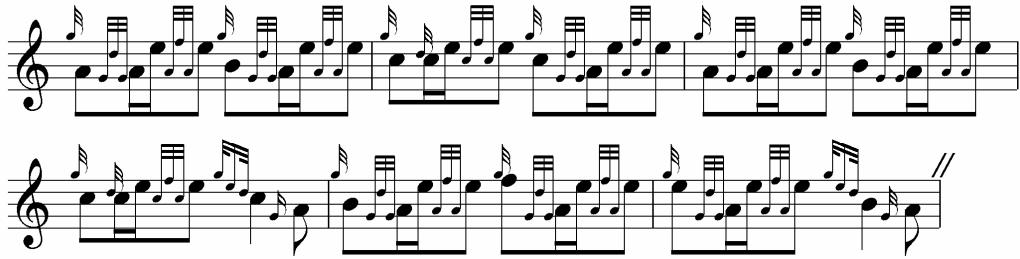
'The Mackay's Banner', taorluath doubling, line 1, Angus MacKay's Ancient Piobaireachd, (pp.119-121)



'The Mackay's Banner', taorluath trebling, line 1, Angus MacKay's Ancient Piobaireachd, (pp.119-121)



'The Mackay's Banner', crunluath singling, line 1, Angus MacKay, Ancient Piobaireachd, (pp.119-121)



The crunluath doubling and trebling follow the pattern of the taorluath variations. MacKay does not have a siubhal.

Angus MacKay's complete score is as follows:

BRATACH CHLANN AOIH.

The Mackay's Banner.

XLVII.

Thumb or Variation 1.

Thumb or Variation 2.

pipes | drums

120

Variation 3.



Doubling of Variation 3.



Trebling of Variation 3.



Crun-luath.



Doubling of Crun-luath.

Trebling of Crun-luath.

D. C. Thema.

Of the later published settings, **Donald MacPhee** (ii, 20-22) reflects elements of both MacDonald and Reid in the ground and thumb variation:

pipes | drums

'The Mackay's Banner', ground, line 1, Donald MacPhee, Collection of Piobaireachd, (ii, 20-22)



'The Mackay's Banner', thumb variation singling, line 1, MacPhee, Collection of Piobaireachd, (pp.20-22)

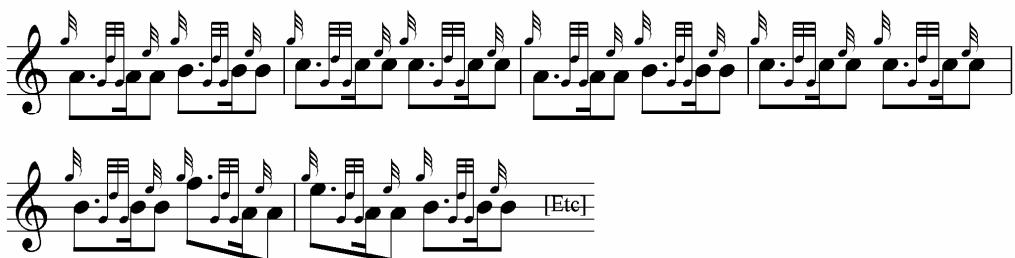


'The Mackay's Banner', thumb variation doubling, line 1, MacPhee, Collection of Piobaireachd, (pp.20-22)



From the taorluath onwards the tune proceeds in a manner broadly similar to MacKay, except in the treblings, thus:

'The Mackay's Banner', taorluath trebling, line 1, MacPhee, Collection of Piobaireachd, (pp.20-22)



C. S. Thomason in *Ceol Mor* (p.121) cites MacDonald's MS and Donald MacKay (the younger), but the score is virtually identical with that in Angus MacKay's *Ancient Piobaireachd*, until the taorluath and crunluath variations, where Thomason follows MacDonald, albeit with MacKay-style pointing of the a mach movements. This score is not reproduced here.

David Glen gives edited versions of MacKay and MacDonald's scores, timing his taorluath and crunluath a mach movements in the "modern" manner, thus:

ADDENDA.

ADDITIONAL VARS. TO "THE MACKAYS' BANNER," Page 84.

Var. 3rd Siubhal. From Donald Macdonald's M.S.

Taor-luath a mach. Angus Mc Arthur, John Mackay and Donald Macdonald's "Tribleachadh an Taor-luath!"

Cruin-luath a mach. Angus Mc Arthur, John Mackay and Donald Macdonald's "Tribleachadh a' Chrun-imain"

John McLennan produces an interesting setting, the force of which lies in the timing of the ground:

pipes | drums

5

BRATACH BHAN IC AOIDH.

MACKAY'S BANNER.

Fonn or Air

Play 1.2.3.4 || 2.3.4 || 2.4

1st. Thumb Var.

Play 1.1.3 || 1.2.3 || 1.3

2nd. Thumb Var.

Da-luth.

Doubling.

Tri-luth.

Doubling.

Ceithir-luth

Doubling.

Ceithir-luth a Mach.

Commentary:

This is part of a family of tunes, and has close melodic links with "The Battle of the Pass of Crieff," as shown by the interchangeability of titles in this group. The earliest MS source,

the Nether Lorn (i, 22-4), shows this affinity quite clearly, giving the "Pass of Crieff" tune under the title "Bhratich Bhan"—[The White Banner]. The title in Donald MacDonald's MS (ff.201-6) is "The White Flag," but this refers to the tune nowadays regarded as a separate one called "MacKay's Banner." Peter Reid's title for this latter tune is "Piobaireachd na Braitch Baine Chlan Aodh The Mackays White Flag" (f.34). It is clear from the MS, however, that Reid had originally titled the tune "The Stewarts Salute," but this is scored out— the slip possibly being caused by the fact that— as those familiar with the Jacobite movement will be aware— the Stewarts also had a white banner.

The following note on the tune by John MacKay in the *Celtic Monthly*, is transcribed in C. S. Thomason's "Ceoil Mor Legends":

A' Bhratach Bhan (The white banner)

Little is known regarding the ancient banner of the MacKays. All that the clan History tells us on the subject is that Robert MacKay son of Neil of Achness (the chieftain who was killed in Thurso in 1649), was the custodian of the colours; that this Robert had a son Neil to whom the colours descended; that Neil in his turn, had a son Robert, who had the flag and that after him his son Hugh had the custody of it.

An old man in Thurso, Hugh MacKay, commonly known as Hugh "Hamar," had the banner in his keeping for many years. It came to him in this way: Hugh MacKay, son of the second Robert above mentioned, had no family. On his death the flag was handed to his brother Angus; and this Angus left it to his son, the Hugh "Hamar" just referred to. On the death of Hugh about 10 years ago, Alexander, county assessor, Thurso, got the flag and in his possession it still remains. Whether Mr. MacKay is of the same family as Hugh, I do not know; but it seems only natural that the old banner should be in the keeping of a descendant of Neil the chieftain, or of the head of the Abrach family for the time being [...]

Accompanied by a friend, I called upon Hugh "Hamar" in 1875... in order to see the flag...and certainly it is a venerable and ancient looking relic. It seemed to be made of knitted silk, and was quite tattered; but whether it had originally been white, I could not tell, as through age and use it had become perfectly grey.

A figure in the centre was so faded and worn that it was difficult to guess what it was intended to represent; and the motto was illegible. Hugh said he believed the figure was a stag, though he was not sure; but he was certain as to the motto, which was "Bidh treun, Bidh treun" (Be valiant, be valiant,) because his father had often told him so [...] (ff. 182 – 191)

* * *

Electronic text © Dr William Donaldson, Aberdeen, Scotland, May 2009