



The Lament for the Children

This tune occurs in the following published sources:

- Uilleam Ross's *Collection*, pp. 12-16;
- C. S. Thomason's *Ceol Mor*, pp. 137-8;
- David Glen's *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp. 100-101;
- Piobaireachd Society Collection*, first series, iii, 1-3;
- G. F. Ross, *Some Piobaireachd Studies*, pp.42-5; *Collection of MacCrimmon and other Piobaireachd*, pp.38-9;

and in the following manuscript sources:

- Donald MacDonald's MS, ff.271-276;
- Angus MacKay's MS, i, 52-54;
- Colin Cameron's MS, ff.58-59;
- Uilleam Ross's MS, ff.228-232;
- John MacDougall Gillies's MS, ff.88-89;
- Robert Meldrum's MS, ff.182-184;

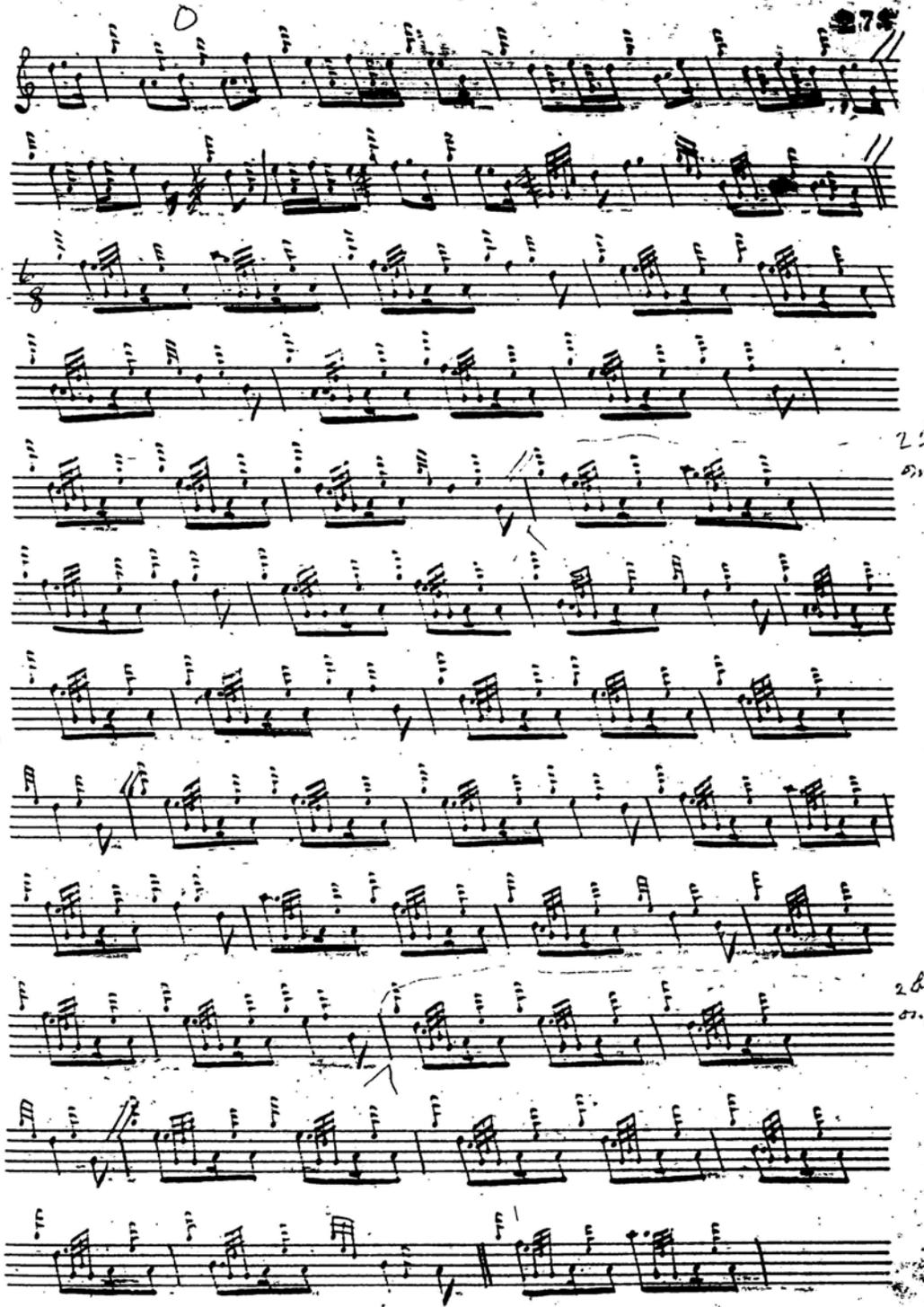
"The Lament for the Children" comes down to us in two basic versions, one via Donald MacDonald and one through Angus MacKay.

Donald MacDonald times the tune as follows:

The Children's Lament
THE CHILDREN'S LAMENT

A handwritten musical score for 'The Children's Lament'. The score is written on ten staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The music is written in a style characteristic of traditional Scottish Gaelic music, featuring a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. There are several repeat signs (double bars with dots) throughout the piece. The notation is dense and appears to be a single melodic line. The paper shows signs of age and wear, with some ink bleed-through and smudges.

272



and so on.

The reader will note that MacDonald attractively accents the opening pulse of his echo beats on F and elsewhere but not always on B, and his frequent use of "reflexive" grace-notes. It seems clear that there are bars missing from his doubling of the ground onwards, but enough is reproduced here to give an idea of his characteristically rich and subtle style.

Angus MacKay times the tune like this:

52

Bumha na' bhoime

*The Children's Lament, **

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation. At the top left, the number '52' is written. Below it, the title 'Bumha na' bhoime' is written in cursive. Underneath that, the title 'The Children's Lament, *' is also written in cursive. The page contains several staves of music. The first two staves are empty. The third staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music consists of a series of notes, many of which are accented with a small 'f' above them. The notation is dense and appears to be a transcription of a specific performance style.

The image displays a page of musical notation for a pipe and drum piece. It consists of ten staves of music, each containing a complex rhythmic pattern. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings. Key annotations include "1st-2nd" above the third staff, "1st-3rd" above the sixth staff, and "Doubling" above the eighth staff. The music is written in a style characteristic of traditional Scottish pipe and drum notation, with a focus on rhythm and pitch. The page is numbered "53" in the top right corner.

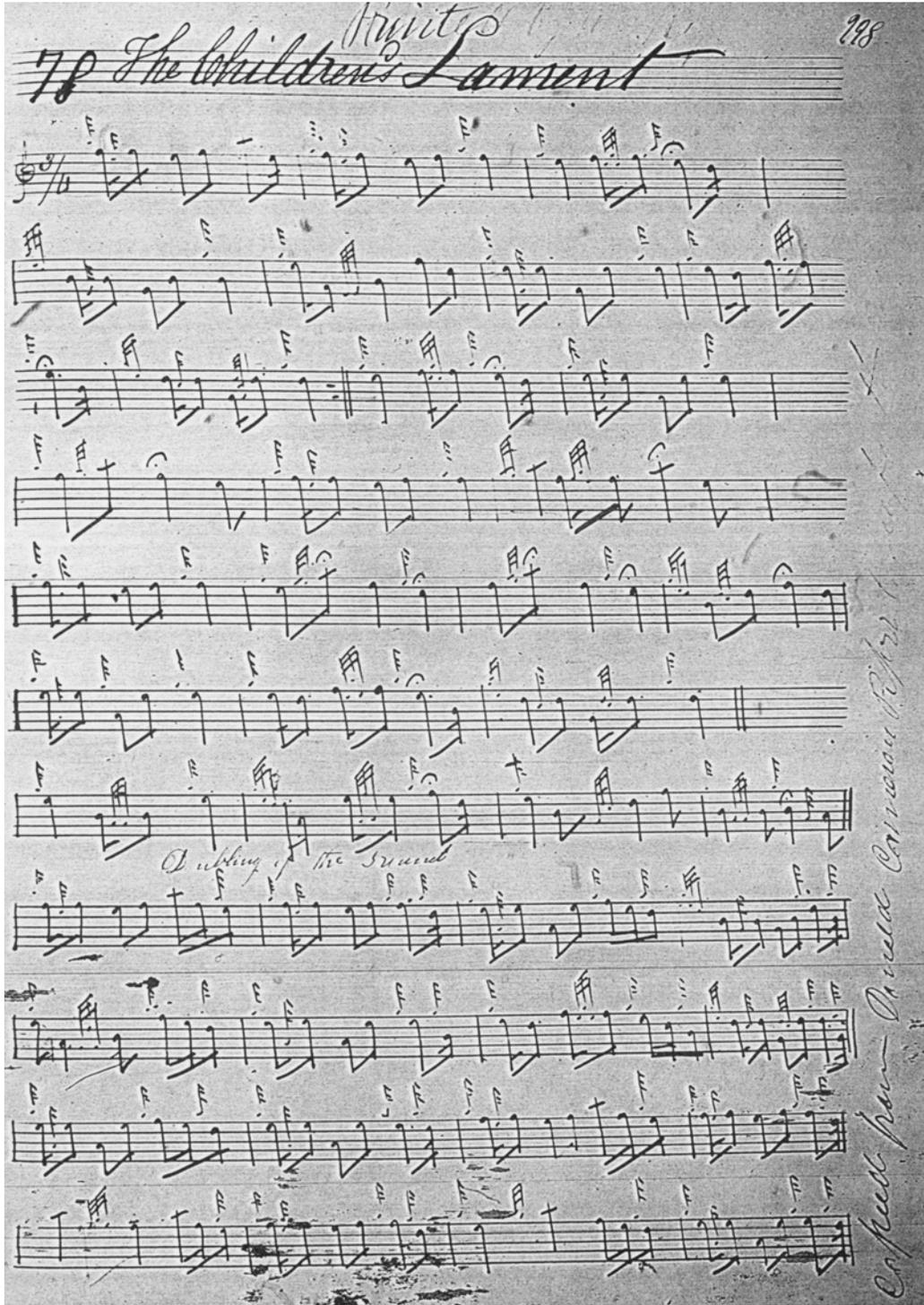
and so on.

The present score lacks MacKay's usual high technical finish: there are missing gracenotes and things, and a string of unaccentuated crotchets. The essence of his style is captured in *Uilleam Ross's* published setting which is reproduced below.



Colin Cameron's setting is very much in the style of MacKay and is not reproduced here.

Interestingly, in **Uilleam Ross's** MS, the ground is timed in 3/4, rather than the 6/8 of his published book, and the score is marked "Copied from Donald Cameron piper to Seaforth." Ross was always a stickler for notational accuracy, and readers will note his setting of the second element of his double echo beats as even quavers:



and so on.

John MacDougall Gillies sets the tune in 6/8 and shows some interesting timings in the ground:



and so on.

Robert Meldrum sets the ground in 6/8, and like Gillies he follows the MacKay style.

With the exception of C. S. Thomason in *Ceol Mor*, there is a high degree of similarity amongst the published settings. The earliest is **Uilleam Ross**. This was the first published version of the tune, present in *Ross's Collection* from the first edition in 1869 onwards. The following gives some idea of its characteristic timings:

A musical score for the tune 'Cumha na Cloinne' (The Children's Lament). The score is written in 6/8 time and is marked 'Moderate'. It consists of five staves of music. The title 'CUMHA NA CLOINNE.' is written in all caps above the first staff, with the subtitle 'THE CHILDREN'S LAMENT.' below it. The number '5.' is written to the left of the first staff. The music is written in a single melodic line on a treble clef staff.

1st Var:

Musical notation for the first variation, consisting of five staves of music in 6/8 time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

Doubling 1st Var:

Musical notation for the doubling of the first variation, consisting of five staves of music in 2/4 time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

Taorluidh. 2nd Var:

Musical notation for the second variation, consisting of two staves of music in 6/8 time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

V.S.

and so on.

David Glen arranges the tune in his characteristically pleasing style:

100

THE LAMENT FOR THE CHILDREN.

GUMHA NA CLOINNE.

Composed by
Patrick Mòr MacCrimmon.

Ùrlar.

44.

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 6/8. It consists of three main sections: the 'Ùrlar' (main melody), 'Var. 1st', and 'Var. 2nd'. Each section is presented on four staves. The 'Ùrlar' section starts with a measure number of 44. The 'Var. 1st' section begins with a repeat sign. The 'Var. 2nd' section also begins with a repeat sign. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests, with some notes marked with accents.

and so on.

The **Piobaireachd Society Collection (first series)** contains an interesting "cut down" in bar 30 of the ground and its doubling. This score is a composite based on the MS of Sir John MacRa of Ardintoul which was compiled about 1820, and an apparently very similar setting of John MacKay, junior, (Angus's brother), a copy of which was supplied by Dr. Charles Bannatyne, who then owned the manuscript. The MacRa MS was then in the possession of Sir Colin MacRae, a founding member of the Piobaireachd Society, for some years its Secretary/Treasurer, and one of the supporters of William Stewart of Ensay with whom he combined to overthrow General Thomason as President and re-instate the traditional style of staff notation in the Society's publications. I do not know the current whereabouts of this manuscript.

Cumha na Cloinne

(The Lament for the Children).

Urlar.

The musical score for the 'Urlar' (ground) of 'Cumha na Cloinne'. It consists of three staves of music in 6/8 time. The notation is in a traditional style with many grace notes and ornaments. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second and third staves continue the melody and accompaniment.

Dùblachadh.

The musical score for the 'Dùblachadh' (doubling) of 'Cumha na Cloinne'. It consists of three staves of music in 6/8 time, continuing the melody and accompaniment from the 'Urlar' section. The notation is similar to the 'Urlar' section, featuring many grace notes and ornaments.

and so on.

General Thomason publishes a composite setting in *Ceol Mor*, citing Donald MacDonald and Angus MacKay's MSS, Uilleam Ross's published book, and Keith Cameron and Colin Cameron as his sources: he also indicates that his main teacher, Donald MacKay, Angus MacKay's nephew, was taught the tune by Donald Cameron. Thomason's score brings MacDonald up to the "standard" 32 bar format, rather attractively. Whether this was his own arrangement or came to him through his Cameron sources is not clear:

G. F. Ross's approach to the tune is broadly that of MacKay. There is much ingenious reasoning in Ross's notes, but this does not add very much to the interpretation of the tune at



a practical level, since he attempts to treat differing approaches to certain phrases, lying well within the stylistic remit of the performer, as signs of "mutilation." Ross' scores are not reproduced here.

Commentary:

In his "Piping Reminiscences" published in the *Oban Times* (04/04/1942, p.5), John MacDonald of Inverness noted that "Of the old pipers, Calum Macpherson, Sandy and Colin Cameron, and Angus and George MacDonald were outstanding. Sandy Cameron was at one time with the Marquess of Huntley [sic]. He excelled in tunes of light top-hand work such as the 'Lament for the Children'."

Angus MacPherson wrote, in his book, *A Highlander Looks Back*, that "Many stories of wit and humour are told of my father, 'Old Calum' [Malcolm MacPherson, *Calum Piobaire*], even to this day...Never will I forget the sad tune as the funeral cortege [1898] wound its way from the little piping cottage to the place of interment at Laggan Bridge. There was weeping in the glen as the bagpipes played their mournful notes of 'Cha Till MacCrimmon,' and when John Macdonald played his last farewell to his beloved tutor with that beautiful piobaireachd 'The Lament for the Children,' as only Donald Mor MacCrimmon himself could emulate. The scene was an unforgettable one as we crossed the bridge on the river Spay, which with its murmuring stream seemed to add its tribute to the solemn occasion...."

When Robert Meldrum died, in July 1941, Robert U. Brown played this tune over his grave in Aberdeen's Springbank Cemetery. Amongst the pallbearers were Alfred E. Milne (G. S. McLennan's friend, who he commemorated in a famous tune) and Malcolm MacInnes, who had helped compile the *Oban Times* series "Pipe-Major Meldrum on Champions Past and Present. A Veteran Piper's Reminiscences" which ran in the paper in the summer of 1940.

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