

## The Big Spree

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

- **Donald MacDonald's** MS, ff.144-9;
- **MacArthur/MacGregor** MS, ff.1-3;
- **Donald MacDonald (Junior's)** MS, f.39 (with the title "The Little Drunkard");
- **Angus MacKay's** MS, i, 1-2;
- **John MacKay's** MS, f.125;
- **Duncan Campbell of Foss's** MS, ff.145-7;
- **Colin Cameron's** MS, ff.60-61;
- **D. S. MacDonald's** MS, ii, 27-8;
- **John MacDougall Gillies's** MS, ff.1-2;
- **David Glen's** MS, ff.84-86;
- **Robert Meldrum's** MS, ff.47-50;

and in the following published sources:

- **Frans Buisman and Andrew Wright**, eds., *The MacArthur/MacGregor Manuscript of Piobaireachd (1820)*, p.129;
- **C. S. Thomason**, *Ceol Mor*, pp.106-7;
- **David Glen**, *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.203-5;
- **G. F. Ross**, *Some Piobaireachd Studies*, p.32.

There are two basic routes through this tune: one which ends with the siubhal doubling; and a longer version going on to taorluath and crunluath variations. Amongst the MS sources, **Donald MacDonald** develops the tune fully, including taorluath and crunluath fosgailte variations (doublings only, he does not include singlings of either of the two final variations). **The MacArthur/MacGregor** is more truncated, developing the tune through to the end of the siubhal doubling and then indicating a return of the ground: there is no sign that more was intended. **Angus MacKay** develops the tune to the same limited extent as the MacArthur/MacGregor which appears to be his main source. **Colin Cameron** also ends with the siubhal doubling.

Amongst the published scores, **Thomason** gives the tune with similar architecture to MacDonald, but adds a crunluath fosgailte singling. **Glen** brings up the tune to its full "modern" dimensions, i.e. ground, first variation singling and doubling, siubhal singling and doubling, taorluath fosgailte singling and doubling, and crunluath fosgailte singling and doubling.

**Donald MacDonald** sets the tune like this:

AN DAORACH MHOR

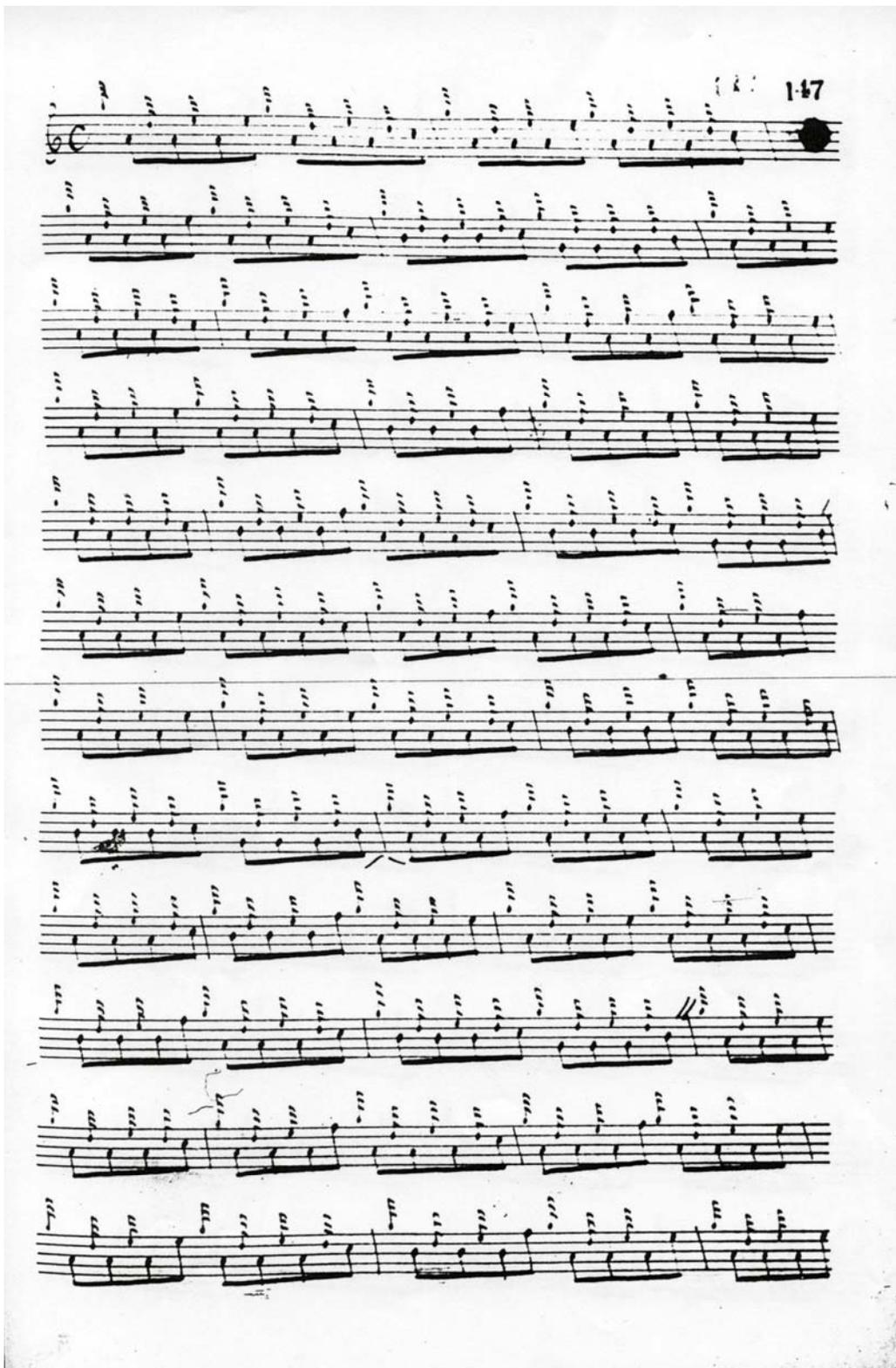
Handwritten musical score for the tune "AN DAORACH MHOR". The score is written on two systems, each consisting of six staves. The time signature is 6/4. The notation is dense, featuring many beamed notes and rests, characteristic of traditional Scottish pipe music. The first system is marked with a handwritten "144" at the top left and a "6/4" time signature on the left side. The second system is marked with a handwritten "1064" on the left side. The title "AN DAORACH MHOR" is printed at the top right of the page.

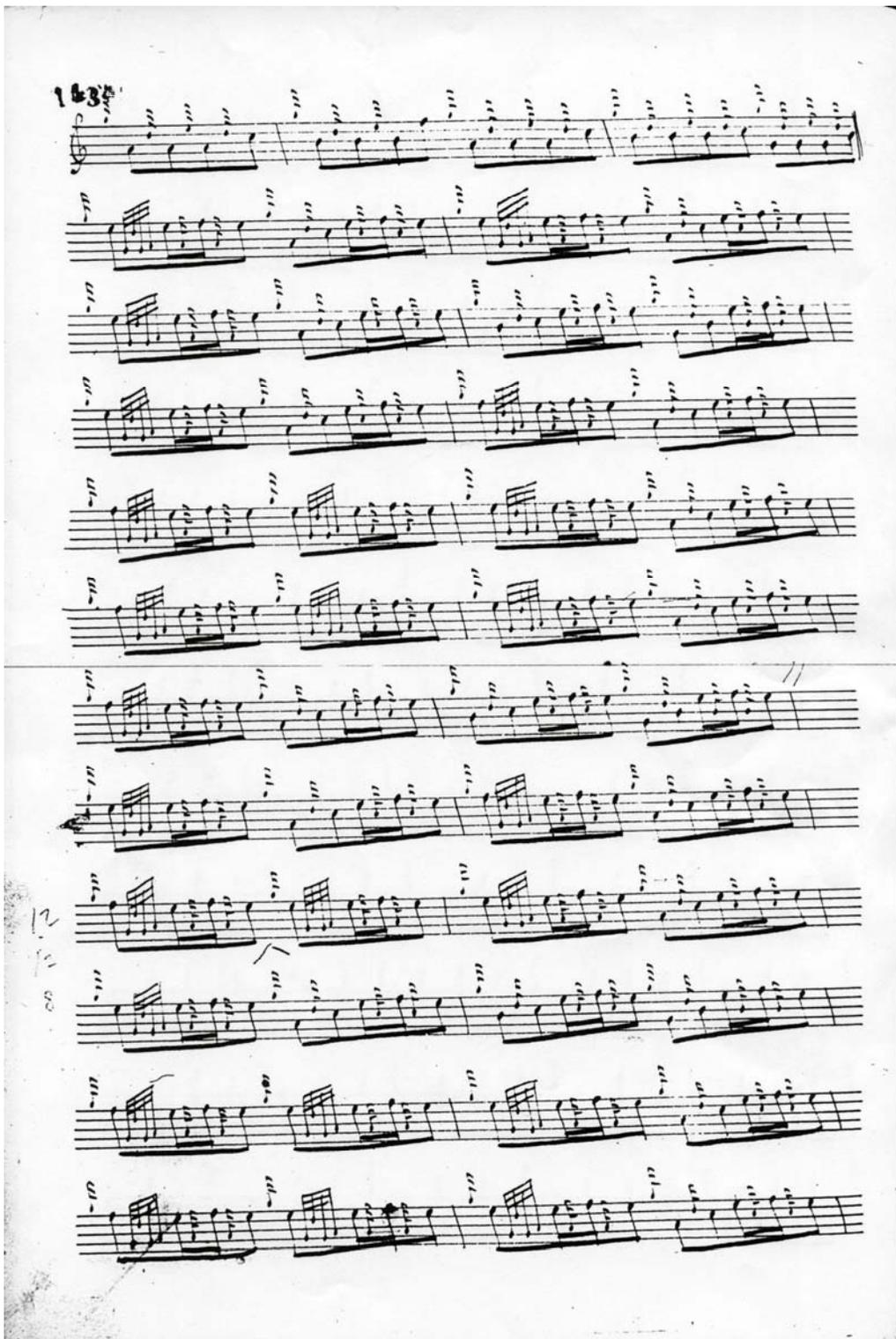
♩♩, 115

The image displays a handwritten musical score for pipes and drums, consisting of 12 staves of music. The notation is dense and rhythmic, featuring numerous slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The score is divided into two systems of six staves each. The first system is marked with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, with the tempo and key signature indicated as '♩♩, 115'. The notation includes a variety of note values, rests, and articulation marks, typical of traditional pipe and drum music.

146

The image displays a handwritten musical score for pipes and drums, numbered 146. The score is composed of 14 staves, each containing a single melodic line. The notation is dense and includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The music is written in a style characteristic of traditional Scottish pipe and drum notation.

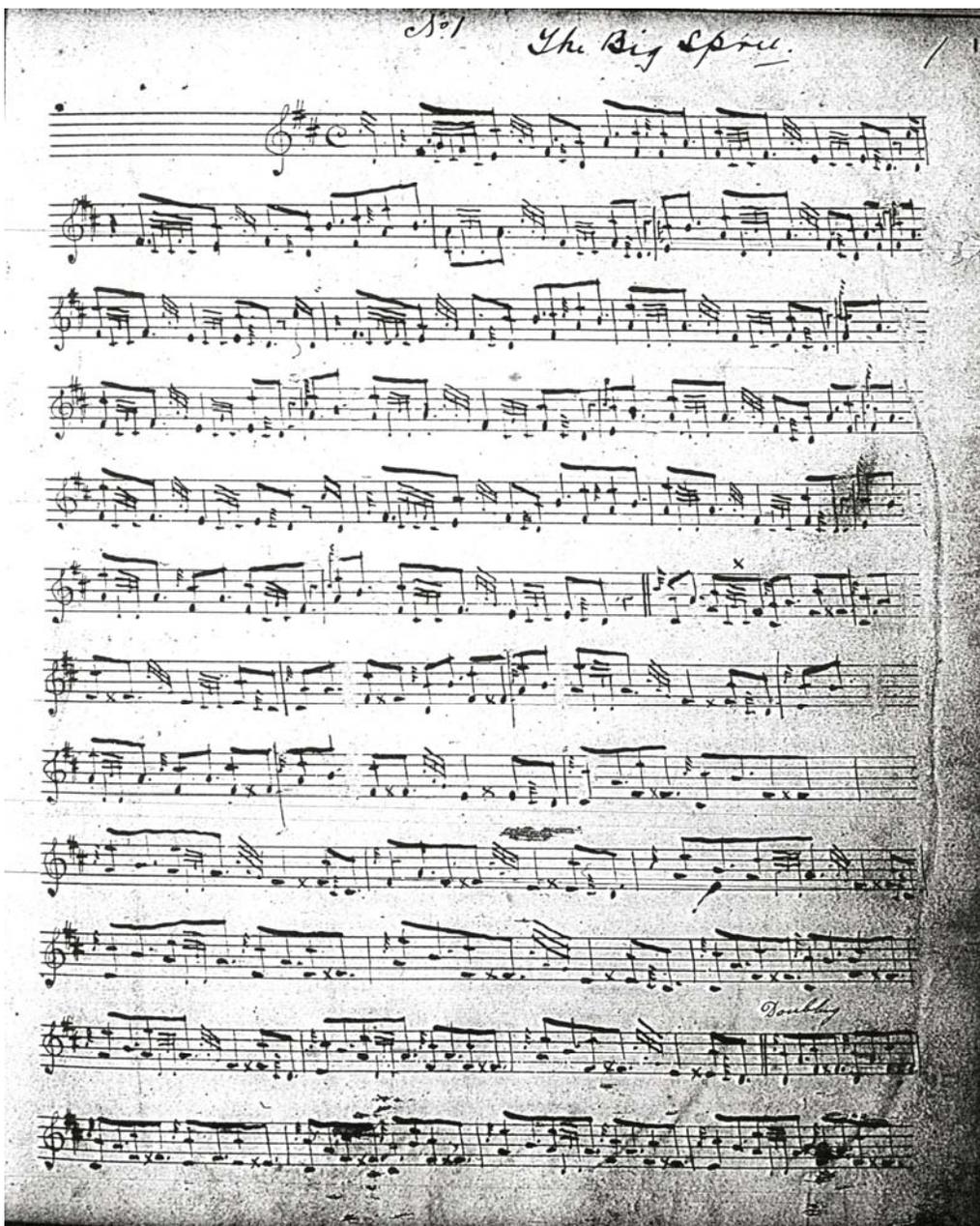


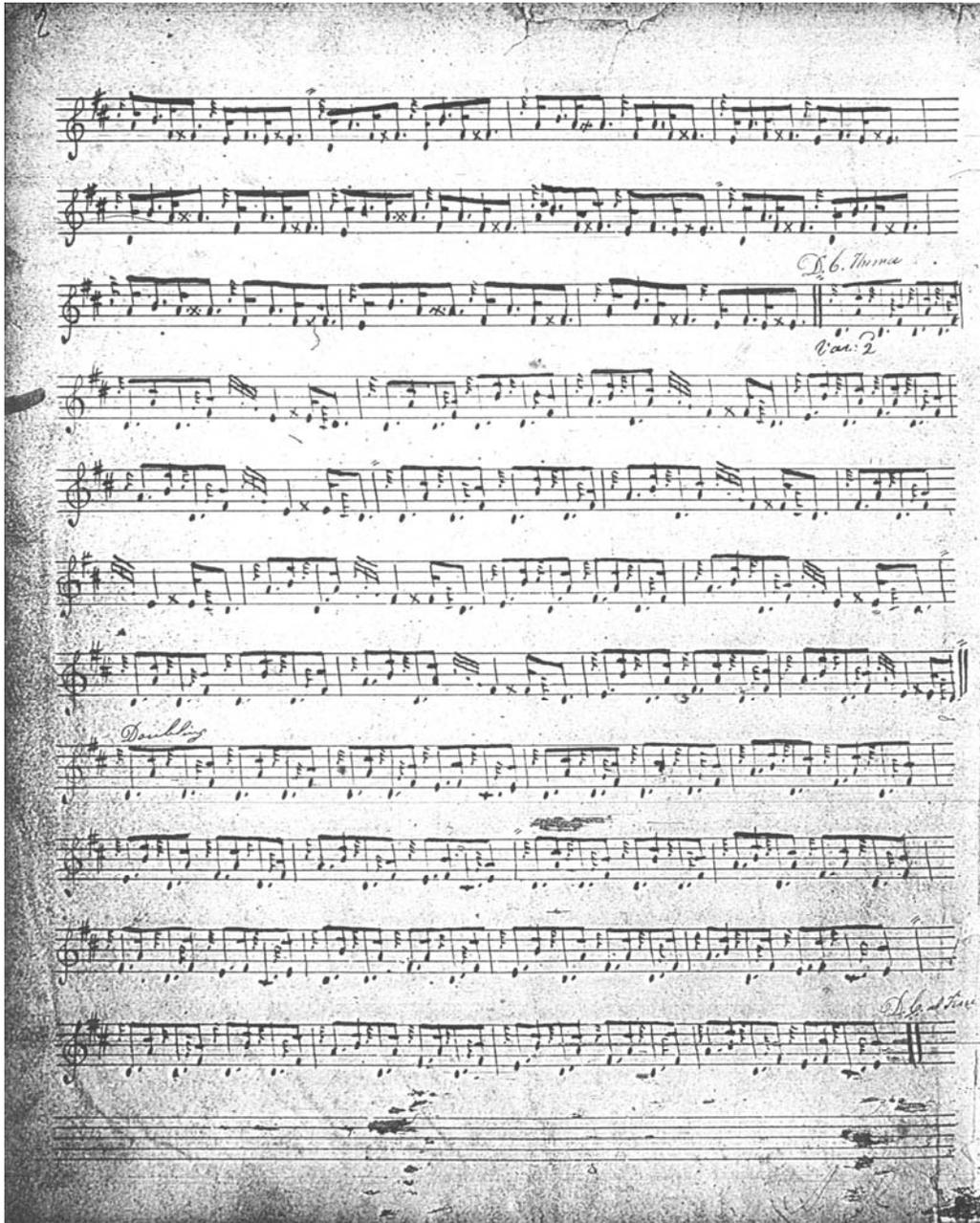




We note the seeming rhythmical awkwardness in the third line of Donald's ground, a feature also shared by MacKay and MacArthur/MacGregor, although this disappears if one times the ground in 4/4 as actually written. MacDonald's characteristic use of the crunluath movement in "opened" form also appears to advantage here.

In the **MacArthur/MacGregor** MS the tune is set as follows:





The tune goes no further than the siubhal doubling, and the setting of the ground seems to have caused the compilers notational problems. There were two drafts of the first page of this tune, the earlier bearing the expression mark "*Andante con espressione*." It is interesting, too, that the ground is twice restated: at the end of both first and second variation doublings.

**Donald MacDonald, jnr.**'s score is in outline only and is not reproduced here.

**Angus MacKay** cites the MacArthur-MacGregor MS as a source, but then overrides its clear instructions about time signature. MacKay sets his ground in 2/4, but his barring is unhelpful: another example, perhaps, of this tune causing editorial difficulties:

*Tha'n doarach ort Sphearrid' thu Cadal.*  
*You are Drums you'd better sleep*  
*N<sup>o</sup> 1. In the M<sup>o</sup>d of the W. S. of London.*  
*An Duairis be Mhor.*

and so on.

**John MacKay** favours MacDonald-style B>C figures with a grip in variation one, otherwise his score does not differ significantly from Angus MacKay's and it is not reproduced here.

**Duncan Campbell of Foss's** setting adds little to Angus MacKay's likewise, and is not reproduced here.

**Colin Cameron's** title is slightly different from MacKay's, "Tha thu gu mhisg, b'fheard thu

cadal," though the meaning is similar. He sets the tune like this:

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for a pipe and drum tune. At the top left, the title "You are drunk better of sleep" is written in cursive. The notation consists of ten staves of music, each with a treble clef and a common time signature. The notes are primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, with many beamed together. Above the first staff, there is a handwritten instruction: "Sha thu fu mhuig, O'head thu cadal." Below the tenth staff, another instruction reads: "In this part of the last two variations is short." The entire score is enclosed in a double-line rectangular border.



A note at foot of the first folio says "The third parts of the last two Variations too Short."

The short third line is made good in **John MacDougall Gillies's** MS. Gillies was a leading Cameron pupil, being taught by Colin's brother Sandy. In addition he has one or two delightful touches of his own:

Tha thu fu mhris b'fhearo thu caoal.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for the Gaelic tune "Tha thu fu mhris b'fhearo thu caoal." The score is written on ten staves of five-line music paper. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a common time signature (C). The melody is primarily composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with frequent use of grace notes and slurs. The score is annotated with several handwritten notes: "Variat" appears between the fourth and fifth staves; "Doubling Var 1st" is written above the sixth staff; and "Bis" is written above the seventh, eighth, and ninth staves, indicating repeated sections of the melody. The handwriting is in black ink on aged, slightly textured paper.

2

*Doubtless you*

*D. S. MacD.*  
Dec 9 1879

*you are drunk you had bet on  
sleep*

**Gillies's** even quavers would allow one to play down on to the initial low A in the ground if one chose—an interesting possibility, seeing as this is the note emphasised in the variations which follow, and we see this realised in the published setting by David Glen below.

**D. S. MacDonald** adds nothing from an interpretational point of view to his source, Angus MacKay's MS, and his score is not reproduced here.

**David Glen** has settings of this tune both in manuscript and in published form. The MS setting is as follows:

84 The Great Spree. An Daorach Mhòr.  
You are drunk, you'd better sleep, than daorach out & pheave d' the cauld.

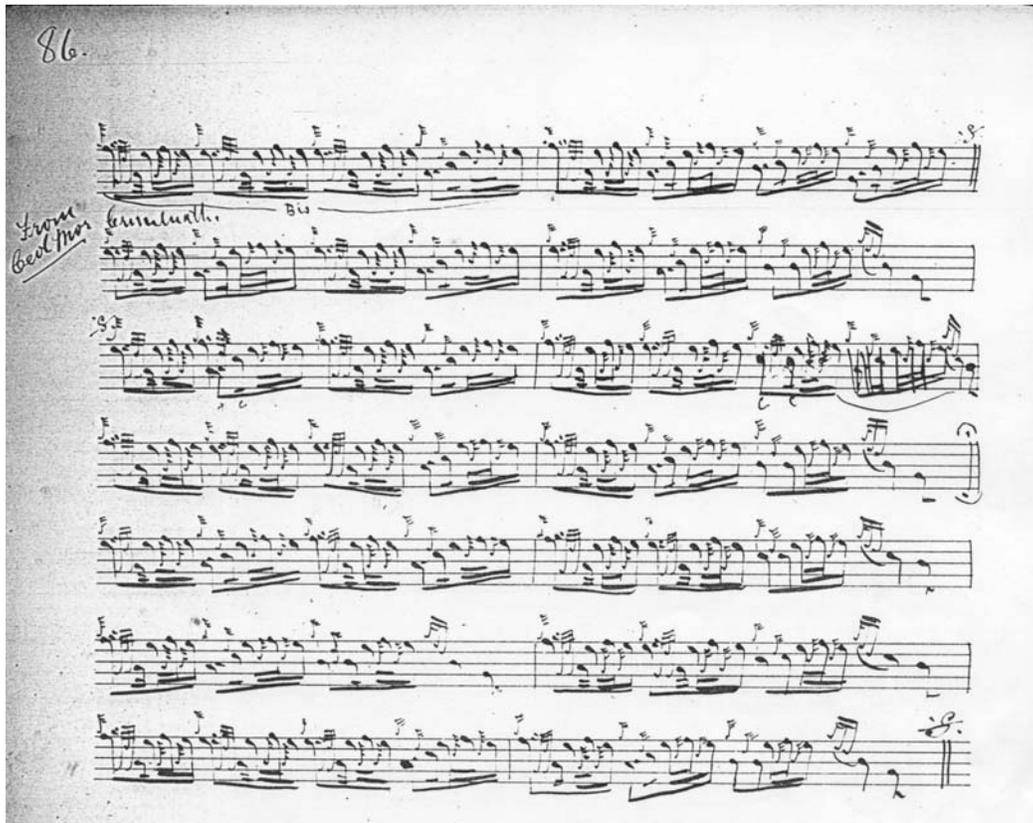
*Handwritten notes:*  
The  
48  
to the  
III.  
The  
And the  
But no  
The

Var. 1.

Double  
Var. 1.

Var. 2.





We know that **Glen** had access to Donald MacDonald's manuscript and also MacArthur-MacGregor, thanks to his friends Charles Simeon Thomason and Charles Bannatyne in whose possession these papers then were, and we also see how closely John MacDougall Gillies was involved in mainstream later nineteenth-century piobaireachd research. We see in Glen's papers, then, a typical "piper's workshop," as the editor worked his way towards a pleasing eclectic setting drawn from a number of identified written sources, making notes on their differences from one another. Glen's marginalia show the basic method: he has a note alongside the first variation, for example, saying "according to McD's S. now corrected to McA's MS. Gillies' differences erased"; at the end of the siubhal doubling he indicates a Da Capo Thema and notes "Gillies ends here. McArthur also ends above"; between lines three and four of the taorluath fosgailte variation he says "correct with corresponding bars of M'D's setting." We see being successfully accomplished here what Piobaireachd Society editors Archibald Campbell and J. P. Grant set themselves also to do, but could not achieve, being unable to reach adequate standards of musical accuracy. It seems all the odder when we consider that the task they took upon themselves in the second and third decades of the twentieth century—namely a reliable and affordable modern edition—had already been substantially realised by David Glen. A century later, Glen's unpublished manuscript score still looks like the pick of the available settings in 4/4 time.

It is curious that in his published *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, Glen elected to print a version based on Angus MacKay, but developing the tune through to taorluath and crunluath variations, singling and doubling:

THE GREAT SPREE.

AN DAORACH MHÓR.

(YOU ARE DRUNK, YOU'D BETTER SLEEP.) (Tha'n daorach ort, 's feàirrd thu cadal.)

Urlar.

85.

Var. 1<sup>st</sup>

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Strain.

Doubling of Var 1<sup>st</sup>

Var. 2<sup>nd</sup>

Two Settings are here given.

Doubling of Var. 2<sup>nd</sup>

Three staves of musical notation for the 'Doubling of Var. 2<sup>nd</sup>'. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. It features a complex, rhythmic melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The first staff ends with a repeat sign, and the third staff also ends with a repeat sign.

Var. 3<sup>rd</sup> Taor-luath. (Added by the Compiler.)

Four staves of musical notation for 'Var. 3<sup>rd</sup> Taor-luath'. This variation is characterized by frequent triplets, indicated by a '3' below the notes. The melody is highly rhythmic and intricate, with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The first staff ends with a repeat sign, and the fourth staff also ends with a repeat sign.

Doubling of Var. 3<sup>rd</sup> Dúblachadh an Taor-luath.

Four staves of musical notation for the 'Doubling of Var. 3<sup>rd</sup> Dúblachadh an Taor-luath'. This section continues the triplet-based melody from the previous variation. It consists of four staves of treble clef notation with a key signature of one flat, featuring dense sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The first staff ends with a repeat sign, and the fourth staff ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Var. 4<sup>th</sup> Crùn-luath. (Added by the Compiler.)

Doubling of Var. 4<sup>th</sup> Dùblachadh a' Chrùn-luath.

Presumably the new emphasis on the initial low A was to reflect its prominence in the opening gesture of the variations

**C. S. Thomason** gives an edited version of Donald MacKay the younger's setting taught to the latter by Donald Cameron:

106 LXIV. THE BIG SPREE, or YOU'RE DRUNK AND HAD BETTER SLEEP.

16.90.

2 Vi. 3 Vi.

4 D.

5 R.

7 C.

8 C.

LXIV. 107

There are clear stylistic links with the settings of Colin Cameron and John MacDougall Gillies above, as one would expect since Thomason too was a Cameron pupil, but Thomason develops the tune to incorporate the later variations: a single taorluath fogsailte and crunluath singling and doubling; so that if one wanted to play a full-length setting of this tune as it came down through the family of Donald Cameron, this would be the obvious choice. Thomason's setting differs significantly from that published in volume one of the *Piobaireachd Society Collection* (Second Series) which is stated to be based on the playing of Colin Cameron's brother Sandy. Most interestingly, Thomason sets the tune, as Angus

MacKay did, in 2/4 time, which gives a very different—and some might think superior—reading of the melody. We shall see something of this in the accompanying MP3 file.

**Robert Meldrum's** score seems to be a composite one derived from Thomason and the Piobaireachd Society's Second Series. It is not reproduced here.

**G. F. Ross,** with his passion for precision and balance between parts, takes issue with the Piobaireachd Society's setting, and with Donald MacDonald's version of the tune:

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**AN DAORACH MHOR.** (The Big Spree.)

The Piobaireachd Society's recent publication gives four versions of this tune—first, the Society's own; second, Donald MacDonald's; third, Angus Mackay's, and fourth, Angus MacArthur's. These versions afford, one and all, most excellent examples of the "irregularity" resulting from non-realisation of the "regularity" of the music. It is extraordinary that writers of tunes in staff notation recognise, apparently, the absolute "regularity" of the Variations, yet fail to recognise the principle of "regularity" governs the Ground of a tune also. Apart from the differences in certain notes apparent in the various versions, the outstanding feature in the Piobaireachd Society's version is the timing, i.e., the division of the parts into bars and the time values given to certain notes or movements to bring them into proper time according to the bars or half bars to which they have been allotted. For instance, if we compare the movements to which the numbers 2, 3 and 4 are affixed, we find they are the same, but in one case on E and C and in the other on F and E, and yet these movements are differently written and differently timed in the Society's version, thus—

Surely this in itself is sufficient evidence of incorrectness? The movements should, of course, be written—

and if further evidence is necessary, compare the fifteenth and sixteenth bars of the Society's version, where the movements referred to stand out clearly as half bars. The reason for this "irregularity" is that the bar marks are wrongly placed and this brings out another timing error in the Society's version. The last two notes of the first bar and the first two notes of the second are written thus—

They really form the last half of the first bar and should be written thus—

The same point is noticeable with the ending of the third and beginning of fourth bars and the ending of the fifth and beginning of the sixth bars (and so on throughout the tune).

The next points to be considered are the discrepancies between the various versions as regards certain notes. We will deal with these in detail. The numbers following refer to the notes in the Compiler's version so marked—

- (1) In MacDonald's version only the note is B, whereas all the others have C, undoubtedly the correct note.
- (2) The Piobaireachd Society has B and recognises its version is open to criticism in this respect. In spite of the fact that Donald Cameron played B the evidence in the tune itself clearly points to C as being the correct note. Similar movements throughout the tune (see those to which the numbers 3 and 4 are affixed) consist of a simple doubling of E. Why therefore should this movement be otherwise than a doubling of C? The other three versions have C.
- (3) The three versions quoted by the Society have B in place of E. Nevertheless the Society would appear to be correct in adopting E. All similar movements throughout the tune (see movements to which numbers 2 and 3 are affixed) show that the initial note is the same as the doubled note at the end of the beat, the only exception being the first half of the last bar.
- (4) The Piobaireachd Society and Mackay have E, F, in place of C, E. The third and fourth bars of the second line are clearly "carry on" bars, as it will be noticed the second and fourth are exactly the same. Consequently we expect in the third bar the same beats on different notes and therefore have little hesitation in considering the C, E, more likely to be correct than the E, F.

The references to the discrepancies between versions also apply to the first two Variations. It is interesting to note that the B appearing as the opening note in the 34th, 11th and 15th bars is repeated in some versions in the Variations referred to, and this note might perhaps be considered the most doubtful note in the tune.

**G. F. Ross** can sometimes seem doctrinaire, but there does seem to be a good deal of silent straying between time signatures in the Society's ground. Perhaps it is this that encourages pipers to tiptoe through the piece as through a minefield treating every phrase "on its merits," which further obscures the flowing and expressive character of the melody.

*Commentary:*

As we have seen, Donald MacDonald continues the tune through to a Crunluath variation; but few of the sources seem to agree on the tune's length. Perhaps this represents artistic choices on the part of the compilers; but it is notable in the earlier authorities' treatment of a number of tunes, that they are not always developed through to what seems to us their logical conclusion. Which raises, in turn, the vexed problem of scribal practice. A number of the early sources doggedly render a tune through all its variations, but in some the main outlines only are given leaving the remainder merely implicit.

Here is the note to the tune from Donald MacDonald's MS:

This Piobaireachd was composed by one of the Chiefs of the Macgregors on one of his vassals, who was a very valiant man; he was a blacksmith by trade, and he was often the foremost at all the battles he was engaged in; but there were times when he would get quite deranged, occasioned by his partaking to freely of ardent spirits, which was the cause of the above air being composed. There are three Daorachs, viz. An Daorach Mhor, 's an Daorach Mheanach, 's an Daorach Bheg; the whole of which were made upon the same wild hero. "History of the Airs in this Volume" p.4.

This is one of the most widely-distributed tunes in the manuscript tradition, suggesting that despite its editorial difficulties, it was regarded as a centrally important piece

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