

The Battle of Waterloo

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

– **David Glen** MS, ff.356-9;

and in the following published sources:

– **Angus MacKay**, *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.89-92;

– **C. S. Thomason**, *Ceol Mor*, pp.167-8;

Angus MacKay sets the tune as follows:

BLÀR BHATERLOO. The Battle of Waterloo.

Composed by

John Mackay.

1815.

XXXVIII.

The main theme is written in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The melody is characterized by a series of eighth-note patterns, often beamed together, and includes some triplet-like figures. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Variation 1.

Variation 1 is written in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The melody is similar to the main theme but features a more pronounced rhythmic pattern, with many notes beamed together in eighth notes. It ends with a double bar line.

Doubling of Variation 1.

The doubling of Variation 1 is written in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. It consists of three staves of music. This section repeats the melody of Variation 1 but with a different rhythmic feel, possibly intended for a different instrument or as a variation in performance style. It concludes with a double bar line.

The first part of the piece consists of two staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music features a complex, rhythmic melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, typical of a pipe and drum tune. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Variation 2.

Variation 2 consists of six staves of music. It continues the complex, rhythmic melody from the first part, with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The notation includes various ornaments and slurs, indicating a highly technical and ornamented performance style. The key signature remains one flat.

Doubling of Variation 2.

The Doubling of Variation 2 consists of six staves of music. This section is a double of the Variation 2, meaning it repeats the same complex, rhythmic melody and ornamentation. The notation is identical to the Variation 2 section, maintaining the same key signature and rhythmic complexity.

Variation 3.

Doubling of Variation 3.

Crùn-luath.

D. C. Thema.

The image displays a musical score for a pipe and drum piece. It is divided into three sections: 'Variation 3.', 'Doubling of Variation 3.', and 'Crùn-luath.'. Each section is written on a single staff of music. The 'Variation 3.' section consists of six staves of music. The 'Doubling of Variation 3.' section also consists of six staves of music. The 'Crùn-luath.' section consists of one staff of music. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The piece concludes with the instruction 'D. C. Thema.'.

Doubling of Crun-luath.

D. C. Thema.

The tune is developed very much in John MacKay's characteristic manner: ground, siubhal singling and doubling, taorluath fosgailte, taorluath duinte, repeat of ground, crunluath singling and doubling with final repeat of ground. By the time we reach the taorluath fosgailte variations there are only eleven bars in line one – there should be twelve on the basis of the ground, which is 6 6 4. The siubhal seems complete: when MacKay switches to 2/4 we get the expected 12 12 8 bar pattern; but when he returns to 4/4 in the taorluath fosgailte things begin to go astray. The

pattern in the taorluath fosgailte is 11 11 8. This is easily enough mended, by simply repeating the eallach –equivalent figure throughout. From the he taorluath duinte onwards, MacKay returns to the expected 12 12 8 pattern.

David Glen sets the tune like this:

356
The Battle of Waterloo. John Mackay. 1815.
Piper

176

1st Var.

Doubling.

354¹²⁹

2nd var.

Doubling.

Vaorluatti.

U.S.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for pipes and drums. It consists of 12 staves of music. The first staff is marked '2nd var.' and the second staff is marked 'Doubling.'. The third staff is marked 'Vaorluatti.'. The score is written in a style typical of traditional Scottish pipe music, with many triplets and complex rhythmic patterns. There are some handwritten annotations and a signature 'U.S.' at the bottom right. The page number '354¹²⁹' is written in the top right corner.

358

1st time

2nd time

Doubting

1st time

2nd time

Crim-luth.

359 ¹⁸⁰

1st time

2nd time

Doubling

1st time

2nd time

1/2 bar on 4/4 time page

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for pipes and drums. The score is written on ten staves. The first two staves are marked '1st time' and the next two '2nd time'. A section of four staves is labeled 'Doubling'. The notation consists of rhythmic patterns of eighth and sixteenth notes, typical of pipe and drum music. At the bottom, there are two empty staves with the handwritten note '1/2 bar on 4/4 time page'. The page number '359' and a small '180' are written in the top right corner.

We may note **Glen's** substituting the "down" eallach wherever it appears, and the perfectly "round" timing of the siubhal (clearly intentional); also his more plausible timing of the taorluath fosgailte variations.

C. S. Thomason's score adds little to the interpretational possibilities of the tune and is not reproduced here.

Commentary:

This is a typically expansive John MacKay tune, with much reiteration of the rising A-B-D/E motif and perhaps not quite enough tension in the resulting tone row to sustain a musical argument of such length. There is only one version of this tune, that given by Angus MacKay, although David Glen's recension of MacKay's score probably gives us the best playing version available.

James Logan's notes in Angus MacKay's *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, dutifully "puff" the piece:

This piobaireachd, which will bear comparison with most of the more ancient compositions, was produced by John MacKay, then with James MacLeod, Esq. of Rasay. [sic] The important part which the Highland regiments performed on this glorious occasion, is universally known, and the striking garb of the Scottish mountaineers, was no less an object of curiosity and admiration on the continent, than the peculiar music of their national instrument, the sound of which animated them to heroism; and, alas! poured forth the death dirge of many a heart that beat high in the morning, as they thought of their country, and what it expected from them in the approaching conflict. ("Historical and Traditional Notes on the Piobaireachds," p.10).

The context reflects long-term exploitation of Highland military resources by the British state; and of the outward flow of important pipers into an all-British rather than a local, Highland context, as we see in the MacKay family itself.

The tune was offered in the Edinburgh Competition of 1819, presumably as a modish new piece, nearly twenty years before its first appearance in print.

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