



The Massacre of Glencoe

This tune is to be found in the following published sources:

- **Angus MacKay**'s, *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.28-30;
- **C. S. Thomason**'s *Ceol Mor*, pp.97-8;
- **David Glen**'s *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, 42-43; 120-1;
- **G. F. Ross**'s *Some Piobaireachd Studies*, p.46;

and in the following manuscript sources:

- **Colin Campbell**'s "Nether Lorn" canntaireachd MS., ii, 9-11;
- **Donald MacDonald**'s MS., ff.119-124;
- **Peter Reid**'s MS., f.21;
- **John MacDougall Gillies**'s MS., f.102;
- **Robert Meldrum**'s MS., ff.175-7; 194-6;

Basically Colin Campbell and Angus MacKay take the same, fairly laconic, route through the tune; most of the later sources follow MacDonald:

Colin Campbell	Donald MacDonald	Peter Reid	Angus MacKay	C. S. Thomason	David Glen 1.	David Glen 2
Ground	Ground	Ground	Ground	Ground	Ground	Ground
Thumb V.1	Thumb V. 1	Thumb V.1	Thumb V.1	Thumb V.1	Thumb V.1	Thumb V.1
	Thumb V.2	Thumb V.2		Thumb V.2		Thumb V.2
	Thumb V.3	Thumb V.3		Thumb V.3		Thumb V.3
	Siubhal singling	Siubhal singling		Siubhal singling		Siubhal singling
	Siubhal doubling	Siubhal doubling		Siubhal doubling		Siubhal doubling
	Siubhal trebling			Siubhal trebling		Siubhal trebling
Taorluath singling	Taorluath singling		Taorluath singling	Taorluath singling	Taorluath singling	Taorluath singling
Taorluath doubling	Taorluath doubling		Taorluath doubling	Taorluath doubling	Taorluath doubling	Taorluath doubling
			Ground	Ground	Ground	
Crunluath singling	Crunluath singling		Crunluath singling	Crunluath singling	Crunluath singling	Crunluath singling
Crunluath doubling	Crunluath doubling		Crunluath doubling	Crunluath doubling	Crunluath doubling	Crunluath doubling
	Crunluath a mach			Crunluath a mach		Crunluath a mach
			Ground	Ground	Ground	Ground



In the “Nether Lorn”, the tune bears the title “Varon Na Glinin Mich gun Erie”, thus linking it with the tune the folklore says was actually played at the Massacre, although nowadays this title is usually attached to the piece known as “The Carles with the Breeks”. At any rate, **Colin Campbell** set it like this:

1st Cherede hodintro hiharin hohio cherede hodintro hiharin diliheche herere heeho
hiodro hehio

2^d Cherede hodintro hiharin hoeo cherede hodintro hiharin diliheche herere heeho
cherede chehohio herere heeho hiodro hehio

3^d Cherede hodintro hiharin hoeo cherede hodintro hiharin diliheche, heche Iveche
heeho hiodin

S part first

1st Chedili hodintro hiharin hoeo chedili hodintro hiharin dili heche [and so on]

S Taolive

1st Chedarid hodarid hindarid hiodin chedarid hodarid hindarid hiodin hedarid chedarid
hodarid hiodin

2^d Chedarid hodarid hindarid hiodin hedarid hedarid chedarid chedarid hedarid chedarid
hodarid hiodin

3^d Chedarid hodarid hindarid hiodin hedarid chedarid hodarid hiodin

D Chedarid hodarid hindarid hiodarid chedarid hodarid hindarid hodarid hedarid
chedarid hodarid hiodarid [and so on]

S Crulive

1st Chebandre hobandre hinbandre hiodin chebandre hobandre hinbandre hiodin [and so
on]

D Chebandre hobandre hinbandre hiobandre chebandre hobandre hinbandre hobandre
hebandre chebandre hobandre hiobandre [and so on]

There is no crunluath a mach.

Angus MacKay set the tune like this:

28

MURT GILINNE A COMHANN.
The Massacre of Glencoe.
A. D. 1692.

Andante.

XI. 

Thumb Variation 1. 

Variation 2. 

Doubling of Variation 2.

1st 2nd

Crun-luath. D.C. Thema.

1st 2nd

Doubling of Crun-luath.

1st 2nd

D. C. Thema.

Note... The History of each Piobaireachd, so far as known to the Editor, will be found in the Notes at the end of the Volume.

Angus MacKay's score is flawed, there being a bar missing throughout from an early stage; if one is drawn to the MacKay style, it might be better to go for David Glen's emended version reproduced below.

Donald MacDonald set the piece like this:

MASSACRE OF GLENCOE. 119



120

The musical score consists of 12 staves. The first staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 12/8. The subsequent staves are in various clefs, including alto and bass clefs, and some have a key signature change to one flat (Bb). The notation includes many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes, characteristic of bagpipe music. The piece concludes with a double bar line on the final staff.





and so on.



Apart from the strangely awkward concluding bars in the ground and first thumb variation, and the rather “square” rendering of the thumb variations throughout, this is a potentially lovely setting, sweet and symmetrical, which many may find, at least in principle, superior to the Colin Campbell/Angus MacKay route through the tune. **David Glen** offers various appealing timings for both scores below.

Peter Reid’s setting, although irregular, shows his characteristic use of lovely reflexive gracenotes in the ground. He develops the tune only as far as the siubhal, merely indicating “& Taorluidh &c D C” in his usual manner:



David Glen gives two settings, one based on MacKay, the second being an edited version from Donald MacDonald's MS. Glen's elegant recensions may be preferred to either of the originals; even so, some may feel that Glen does not satisfactorily resolve the problem of the measure endings in MacKay and MacDonald's ground and first thumb variation. This is his version of MacKay's score:

THE MASSACRE OF GLENCOE. (1692.)

MORT GHLINNE COMHANN.

Urlar. *Moderately slow.*

17.

Taor-luath.

Dùblachadh an Taor-luaith.

The Bars marked * were not in the original Setting published by Mackay, and may be omitted at pleasure, but without these the measure is not complete.

1st

2nd Repeat the Ùrlar. Crùn-luath.

1st 2nd

1st 2nd

Dùblachadh a' Chrùn-luath.

1st 2nd

1st 2nd

1st 2nd

Repeat the Ùrlar.



The following timings might be preferred at the end of the ground and thumb variation:



Glen's second setting is based on Donald MacDonald's score:

120

THE MASSACRE OF GLENCOE. (2nd Setting.)

MORT GHLINNE COMHANN.

Urlar.

52. 

Var. 1st 

Var. 2nd 

Doubling of Var. 2nd 

Var. 3rd 

* Doubling and Trebling of Var. 3rd 

Taor-luath. 

written  played 

* The notes of the Trebling have their stems turned up. This is the Donald Macdonald MS. Setting. (Edited.)

Dùblachadh an Taor-luaith.

omit 2nd time.

Crùn-luath.

omit 2nd time.

Dùblachadh a' Chrùn-luath.

omit 2nd time.

Crùn-luath-a-mach.

omit 2nd time.

Repeat the Ùrlar.

C. S. Thomason's setting represents the fullest development of the tune. It bears a note stating that it is taken from "(D. MacD's MS.)" but although it follows MacDonald in all the main timings of the tune, Thomason includes repeats of the Ground which MacDonald does not indicate, although these are very much in line with MacDonald's general practice; further sources cited include Angus MacKay's published book, David Glen and Donald MacKay. Thomason also makes the timing of MacDonald's thumb variations more explicit:

THE MASSACRE OF GLENCOE. (D. MacD's MS.)





John MacDougall Gillies's score is merely a sketch of the leading features of Donald MacDonald's setting and is not reproduced here.

Robert Meldrum has two settings, the first a transcript of MacKay, the second marked "MacDonald's setting about 1808...taken from Ceol Mor"; neither is reproduced here.

G. F. Ross addresses the question of the line endings, arguing that both Thomason and Glen err in their emendation as follows:

MASSACRE OF GLENCOE.

THE finish of the last part of this tune is mutilated in the published versions in MacKay, Glen and "Ceol Mor." The following is an Analysis of the three versions, with the 6th and 12th bars given above by way of comparison:—

Div. 1	2	3	4
All versions 6th & 12th bars.			
			
Glen's 16th bar.			
			
MacKay's 31st, 32nd & 33rd.			
			
'Ceol Mor' 16th.			
			

As the tune is one of 6. 6. 4. metre there is no reason why the finish of the last part should differ from the finish of the other parts. Careful study of the Analysis leads one to think the initial error was in going to the C instead of the B in the 2nd Division. The player to get to the B puts in the extra half bar given in MacKay (Division 3). Glen recognises MacKay has half a bar too many and omits Division 1. General Thomason does not agree with Glen, evidently recognising the C in Division 2 is wrong, and adds one of his favourite "eallach" beats (Division 4) to complete the measure. The most simple correction, and least open to criticism, is the repetition of the 6th (and 12th) bar as the 16th, thus conforming to the usual rules of construction governing a 6. 6. 4. metre tune.

Commentary:

This tune commemorates a famous episode in Scottish history, illustrating what could happen to people when governments changed and the time came to settle old scores. Here is what "Fionn" says in Glen's *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*: "The scenery of Glencoe, Argyllshire, is allowed to be the grandest and most magnificent in Scotland, and would have attracted visitors from all lands even had the gloom of its misty mountains, with their sombre



shadows, not been associated with a deed of blood every way in keeping with the scene of its commission. The massacre of Glencoe will for ever remain a foul blot on the memory of King William, but trebly so on the men who planned and carried it out. The real moving spirits in the bloody drama were the Earl of Breadalbane, Secretary Stair, the Duke of Argyll, and Campbell of Glenlyon.

It is unnecessary to enter into details regarding this foul stain on the page of Scottish History. Suffice it to say that it was carried out with fiendish cruelty by the very people who shared the hospitality of the MacIains of Glencoe. No mercy was shown to young or old, and the victims were in many cases cruelly outraged by the soldiers. The houses were set on fire as soon as the inmates had been butchered, and the sufferings of the women and children who were allowed to escape were horrible in the extreme. Women with babes in their arms sat down and slept their last sleep in the snow, or perished of cold and hunger in the corries on the mountain sides.” (“Historic, Biographic, and Legendary Notes to the Tunes”, p.8).

The MacIain MacDonalds of Glencoe were famous cattle raiders, and few of their neighbours had cause to regard them with much affection. In addition, they had recently been “out” at Killiecrankie on the Jacobite side. But what made them so inviting a target to a Scottish Privy Council concerned to make a point to others of their ilk in the Highlands was that their numbers were modest and their location accessible. Making a signal example of Glencoe was a far more manageable prospect than tangling with the likes of Clanranald or Glengarry; and so, on that winter evening in 1692, the detachment of Argyll’s regiment, led by Campbell of Glenlyon, which had been quartered upon them, acting on previously issued orders, quietly got out of their beds and put their hosts to the sword. There was a tremendous hullabaloo in the Lowlands about “slaughter under trust”, (as usually happened when clients in the glens were on the receiving end of acts of official displeasure), but this kind of thing was by no means unknown in the old Highlands when family rivalries ran hot and things simmered on the threshold of open blood feud. Those interested in this aspect of the old Scotch politics will find John Prebble’s *Glencoe: the Story of the Massacre* (Lond., 1966, with numerous later editions) a superbly readable account of the whole affair.

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