

The King's Taxes

There are settings of this tune in the following manuscripts:

- **Angus MacKay's** MS, i, 215;
- **Colin Cameron's** MS, f.124;
- **Duncan Campbell of Foss's** MS, ff.23-25;
- **Uilleam Ross's** MS, ff.49-50;
- **D. S. MacDonald's** MS, i, 71-2;
- **John MacDougall Gillies's** MS, ff.70-1;
- **Robert Meldrum's** MS, ff.132-134;

and in the following published sources:

- **David Glen's** *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.154-5;
- **C. S. Thomason's** *Ceol Mor*, p.361;
- **G. F. Ross's** *Collection of MacCrimmon and Other Piobaireachd*, pp.14-15.

Angus MacKay sets the tune as follows:

Mal an Righ.

The Kings

215

MacKay indicates the doubling of the first variation by reversing the stems of certain notes—and the implied timing is very much as played today. Timing of the taorluath fogsailte if the common-time marking is to be respected would be different from the one commonly heard today, though, and this is true as a general rule of this movement in MacKay's scores. He repeats the ground at the end of the taorluath fogsailte doubling, and again at the end of the tune after the crunluath fogsailte doubling. MacKay may perhaps have been uncertain of the

appropriate English title as the key word is left blank on the actual score; he calls this tune "The King's Tribute" in his index.

Colin Cameron's manuscript which was probably begun in 1859 may contain the earliest score to bear the "King's Taxes" title. The tune is written out roughly and without gracenotes from the taorluath doubling onwards. In terms of interpretation it adds nothing to MacKay and is not reproduced here.

The tune reveals interesting links between the manuscripts of Colin Cameron and **Duncan Campbell of Foss**. Campbell also has "The King's Taxes" as the title. The placing of the passing note at the end of bar three of the first variation is the same in Campbell and Cameron—namely a D—in MacKay it is a B, suggesting that Cameron may have been the source for Campbell or vice versa, and perhaps that the relationship of both their scores to MacKay's is indirect. Further, Campbell goes up to the D in the first bar of line two of the variation exactly as Cameron does (it should really be E here as in MacKay). Neither indicates that the ground be repeated within or at the end of the tune. Duncan Campbell sets the tune as follows:



24

Doubling of Variation 1st



Variation 2nd

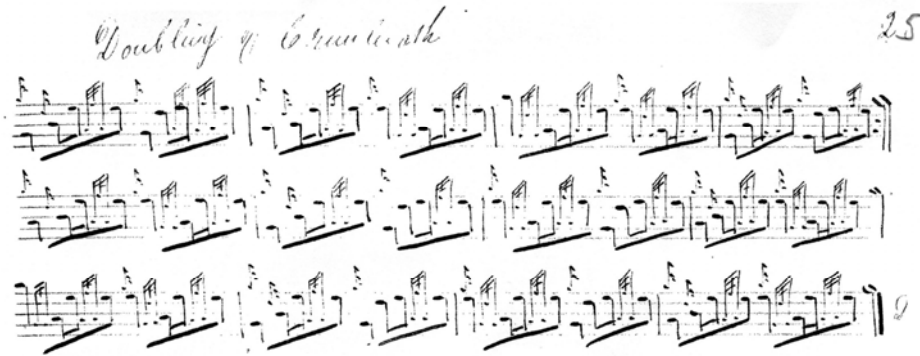


Doubling of Variation 2nd



Conclusion





Uilleam Ross also calls the tune "Mall an Rìgh The King's Taxes." He does not have the little features mentioned above which link the Campbell and Cameron scores. He gives MacKay's version (without attribution), although he changes the time signature to 6/8 in the taorluath fòsgailte singling and leaves it there for the remainder of the tune. This produces the "modern" timing for this movement, and this is the earliest example of it. Otherwise Ross adds nothing stylistically to the tune and is not reproduced here. Ross gives no indication that the ground be repeated within or at the end of the tune.

D. S. MacDonald gives his source's—namely Angus MacKay's MS—"The King's Tribute" title and adds a note explaining MacKay's usage in setting variation one as follows: "When var. 1st is played the second time, the notes with the stems upwards are to be used." MacDonald directs that the ground be repeated at the end of the tune but not within it. With that exception, D. S. MacDonald's score is exactly as in MacKay but written out in full with all the gracenotes added. Since it adds nothing stylistically to the tune, it is not reproduced here.

John MacDougall Gillies's score is a partial one with the melody notes written out but not graced fully from the taorluath fòsgailte onwards. Gillies repeats the ground at the end of the tune but not within it. Otherwise his setting adds nothing stylistically to Angus MacKay and it is not reproduced here.

Robert Meldrum gives a date for this tune, "About 1597" and an attribution to Donald Mór MacCrimmon. He indicates that an "Open Crunluath may be played," presumably as an a mach; an early indication of the stylistic changes introduced by Archibald Campbell in his editing of the Piobaireachd Society's scores.

David Glen's score: the ground shows a good example of Glen's characteristic use of the slur to indicate smooth legato playing. Glen drops to low G at the beginning of the last bar of the second line of the ground, but otherwise his setting is similar to MacKay's, with the exception of the timing of the taorluath fòsgailte. The fluent way in which the notes are beamed,

pointed and tied probably makes this the most attractive of the published scores. Glen sets the tune as follows:

THE KING'S TAXES.

MÀL AN RÌGH.

Urlar.

65.

Var. 1st

Doubling of Var 1st

Var 2nd

Written. Played.

The musical score consists of several staves of music. The first two staves are a single melodic line with triplets. The third staff is labeled 'Doubling of Var. 2nd' and shows a more complex texture with multiple voices. The fourth staff continues this texture. The fifth staff is labeled 'Var 3rd Crùn-luath, (fosgailte.)' and features a different rhythmic pattern. The sixth staff continues this variation. The seventh staff is labeled 'Doubling of Var. 3rd Dùblachadh a' Chrùn-luath.' and shows a further development of the variation. The eighth staff continues this. The ninth staff is labeled 'Repeat Ùrlar.' and shows a final variation of the theme.

C. S. Thomason's score gives Angus MacKay's MS as his single source. Since it adds nothing to MacKay in terms of style or interpretation, his score is not reproduced here.

G. F. Ross's score bears a note "Probably about 1597. In 1597 Rory Mor MacLeod had to give security for his good behaviour, of 10,000 Merks, to the King." (p.14). He also has the attribution to Donald Mor MacCrimmon we see also in Robert Meldrum's MS. Ross follows Glen in dropping to low G at the beginning of the last bar of line two of the ground, and he has an interesting timing of the throw up to high G at various places in the tune in an presumed attempt to smooth out the "additional pulse" at these points in the other scores. Ross directs that the fosgailte crunluath be played in the "opened" style:

Bar Nos.	1 & 5	2 & 6	3 & 7	4 & 8	9	10
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Ground.

Variation.

Doubling.

Taobhludh Fosgailte.

Doubling.

Creanludh Fosgailte.

Doubling.

* In 1597 Rory Mor MacLeod had to give security for his good behaviour, of 10,000 Merks, to the King.

pipes | drums

Donald Mor Mac Crimmon.

11	12	13	14	15	16

Commentary:

Except for the minor differences noted in Colin Cameron and Duncan Campbell's settings, the tune is recorded again and again more or less exactly as it had first appeared in Angus MacKay.

This was the first tune to win one of the new Piobaireachd Society competitions at Oban in 1904, gaining for the winner, John MacDonald of Inverness, the unheard of sum of £20.00—at a time when the Gold Medals at Oban and Inverness brought their winners a mere £8.00. The *Oban Times* reported the occasion as follows, noting successes for a number of piping legends then at an early stage of their careers:

Tuesday morning broke rather unpromisingly, and there was every prospect of the games being marred this year with rain. Towards noon, however, the sun broke through, and the remainder of the day was bright and warm. The attendance at the commencement was only moderate, but with the prospect of a fine afternoon and with the military attractions on the card, the numbers gradually swelled, and during the remainder of the day the pay-boxes were kept exceedingly busy [...]

The first part of the programme was occupied with the piobaireachd competitions. For the principal event nineteen competitors entered, but the whole of the contestants did not put in an appearance. The Society is, however, gratified by the response made to its initial efforts, and also with the piping results. The competitive tunes, the history of each was recently described in the "*Oban Times*," were [tunes follow]....the setting being that of "*Ceol Mor*," the distinguished author of which, (Major-General Thomason) was present during the day. The

first prize—a gold medal and £20—fell to Mr. John MacDonald, Inverness, for "The King's Taxes." This is rather a hard tune, the proper getting up of which presents some difficulties, but MacDonald gave an excellent rendering of it. Pipe-Corporal Geo. Stewart MacLennan, 1st Gordon Highlanders, a young piper, carried off the second prize with the "Lament for the Earl of Antrim," which he played carefully and well. The third prize winner was Corporal Piper W. Ross, 1st Scots Guards, who played "The Desperate Battle" with good effect. The fourth prize fell to James A. Centre, Edinburgh, who made a very promising appearance.' ("The County Gathering," *Oban Times*, 17/9/1904, p.5).

Not even "Fionn" knew anything about the background of this tune as the following note from David Glen's *Ancient Piobaireachd* may indicate:

53

The King's Taxes

Màl an Rìgh.

Tune 65.

Page 154.

IN the good old times, under the Clan system the Clansmen neither paid rates or taxes, all such payments being made in service. One of our Gaelic bards, J. MacCuraig, singing of these times, designates them the Golden Age of the Highlands ("Linn an Aigh"). Here is a quotation from the original poem:—

An nuair bha Gàidhlig aig na h-eòin,
Bha'm bairn' air an lòn mar dhrùchd,
A mhil a' fàs air bhàrr an fhraoich,
A h-uile nì cho saor 'sam bùrn.
Cha robh daoine pàigheadh màil
Orra cha robh càin no clis;
Iasgach, sealgach agus coill,
Gun fhoighneachd aca is gun phris.

When the birds in Gaelic sang,
Milk lay like dew upon the lea,
The heather into honey sprang,
And everything was good and free.
No tax or tribute used to fall
On honest men or any rent;
To hunt and fish was free to all,
And timber without price or stent.

This tune may have been composed about the time when the King's taxes were first imposed.

"Historic, Biographic and Legendary notes to the Tunes" (p.16)

In his editorial notes to this tune in *The Piobaireachd Society Collection* (second series), v,138, Archibald Campbell queried the attribution of this tune to Ronald MacDougall in General Thomason's index. Whether the tune was composed by MacDougall cannot now be determined, but it seems likely that he was MacKay's source: the reader will note the docket "McDu" at the end of the first line of the ground of Angus MacKay's score.

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