



## MacCrimmon will never return

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

- **Nether Lorn**, i, 117-19;
- **Peter Reid**, ff.48-9;

and in the following published sources:

- **Angus MacKay's** *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.17-20;
- **Donald MacPhee's** *Collection of Piobaireachd*, ii, 1-2;
- **C. S. Thomason's** *Ceol Mor*, p.162;
- **David Glen's** *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.74-5;
- **John McLennan's** *The Piobaireachd as Performed in the Highlands*, p.4;

Since there is little stylistic difference between the published scores of this tune, the main interest focuses on the Nether Lorn score and that of Peter Reid. Both show MacKay's brutally plain style softened by appropriate decoration. The tune is nowadays fairly seldom heard, perhaps because of the rather dull way in which it develops, narrowing down to a monotonously reiterated three note scale on D, E and F. Basically there is not enough musical variety between the A and B phrases to support the later variations, unless very artfully played.

**Colin Mór Campbell** sets the tune like this:

56      Called Cha till me tuil

1<sup>st</sup>      Drevehiao, echevecheento Two times drevehiao ehaihaemto  
2d      Drevehiao echevecheento, drevehiao echaihaemto Two times  
3d      Drevehiao echevecheento drevehiao ehaehaemto

D 1<sup>st</sup>      Drevehiao echeIcheento Two times drevehiao ehalhamto  
2d      Drevehiao echeIcheento drevehiao ehal hamto, Two times  
3d      Drevehiao echeIcheento drevehiao ehal hamto

DD 1<sup>st</sup>      DreIhio IeheIcheento, Two times dreIhio Ihalhamto,  
2d      DreIhio IeheIcheento, dreIhio Ihalhamto Two times  
3d      DreIhio IechIchento dreIhio Ihalhamto

S    First Motion

1<sup>st</sup>      Chebare hebare chebare chehio chebare hebare chebare chehio, chebare hebare harode hahio  
2d      Chebare hebare chebare chehio, chebare hebare harode Two times [?Chebare hebare chebare cheho, chebare hebare harode harode chebare hebare harode hahio?]  
3d      Chebare hebare chebare chehio chebare hebare harode hahio

D 1<sup>st</sup>      Chebare hebare chebare chebare Two times chebare hebare harode harode  
2d      Chebare hebare chebare chebare, chebare hebare harode harode Two times



3d Chebare hebare chebare chebare, chebare hebare harode harode

S Taolive

1<sup>st</sup> Chedarid hedarid chedarid chehio Two times chedarid hedarid hadarid hahio

2d Chedarid hedarid chedarid chehio chedarid hedarid hadarid hahio Two times

3d Chedarid hedarid chedarid chehio chedarid hedarid hadarid hahio

D 1<sup>st</sup> Chedarid hedarid chedarid chedarid Two times chedarid hedarid hadarid hadarid

2d Chedarid hedarid chedarid chedarid, chedarid hedarid hadarid hadarid Two times

3d Chedarid hedarid chedarid chedarid chedarid hedarid hadarid hadarid

Cruive

S 1<sup>st</sup> Chebandre hebandre chebandre chehio Two times, chebandre hebandre habandre hahio

2d Chebandre hebandre chebandre chehio chebandre hebandre habandre hahio Two times

3d Chebandre hebandre chebandre chehio, chebandre hebandre habandre hahio

D 1<sup>st</sup> Chebandre hebandre chebandre chebandre Two times chebandre hebandre habandre habandre

2d Chebandre hebandre chebandre chebandre, chebandre hebandre habandre habandre Two times

3d Chebandre hebandre chebandre chebandre chebandre hebandre habandre habandre

DD Strulive

1<sup>st</sup> Chebandre hebandre chebandre chebandre Two times chebandre hebandre chetradre chetradre

2d Chebandre hebandre chebandre chebandre, chebandre hebandre chetradre chetradre Two times

3d Chebandre hebandre chebandre chebandre chebandre hebandre chetradre chetradre

This might suggest something along the following lines:

Cha till me tuil, Nether Lorn, Ground line one



Thumb variation, line one



Leumluath singling, line one



And so on.

Of the scores in staff notation, the most interesting is probably that of Peter Reid, and shows signs of the beautifully decorated MacArthur style in which he was taught. His title is "Cha Till mi Tuille *I return no more A Lament play'd at Funerals—*." It is set as follows:

*Ch'ge Lill mi Tuille } a Lagment plaid  
Return no more } at Funerals*

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a pipe and drum tune. The title is written in cursive at the top: "Ch'ge Lill mi Tuille } a Lagment plaid" and "Return no more } at Funerals". The score consists of several staves of music. A handwritten note "Doubling of 1<sup>st</sup> Variation" is written above the fourth staff. Another handwritten note "First Variation - misplaced" is written below the fifth staff. The music is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

The compiler was obviously dissatisfied with this score; one notes his marking of the singling of the first variation as "misplaced" and the curious prolongation of line three of the ground. It is doubtful, indeed, if it is finished, and it is interesting that the compiler recorded Angus MacKay's ground of this tune on the reverse of the sheet.

There is a high degree of unity amongst the published settings. **David Glen** set the tune like this:



# MACCRIMMON WILL NEVER RETURN.(1745.)

## CHA TILL MACGRUIMEIN.

Composed by  
DONALD BAN MACCRIMMON.

Ùrlar. *Very slow.*

32.

Var. 1st

Var. 2nd

Var. 3rd

Var. 4th Taor-luath.

Dùblachadh an Taor-luath.

Written Played Repeat Ùrlar

Crùn-luath.




Dùblachadh a' Chrùn-luath.




Repeat Ùrlar.

*Commentary:*

This tune was formerly called simply "Cha till mi tuille." The link with the MacCrimmons was established by the writer Sir Walter Scott who used a version of the air for his original song "Lament- (*Cha till suinn tuille*)" which was published in the second volume of Alexander Campbell's *Albyn's Anthology* in 1818. It begins as follows:

MacLeod's wizzard flag from the grey castle sallies,  
 The rowers are seated, unmoor'd are the galleys;  
 Gleam war-axe and broad-sword, clang target & quiver,  
 As Mackrimmon sings, "Farewell to Dunvegan for ever."

The title was given as "Cha Till MacCriumein. MacCrummen will never return" with an attribution to Donald Bàn MacCrimmon in Angus MacKay's *Ancient Piobaireachd* published in 1838, with historical notes by the antiquarian James Logan. For further information on this see *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society 1750-1950*, especially pages 418-420.

As Peter Reid suggested above, this tune was indeed played at funerals, including that of Calum Piobaire. In its account of this event in July 1898, the *Oban Times* reported

The remains of the deceased were interred with Highland honours in Lagganbridge churchyard – excellent pipe music being discoursed by the pipers of Cluny Macpherson of Cluny and that of the Count de Serra Largo in conjunction with the Badenoch Volunteer Pipe Band, under the able leadership of Colour-Sergeant MacDonald, Kingussie. ... On arrival at the grave Mr John MacDonald, [of Inverness] piper to Count de Serra Largo, played "MacCrimmon will never return" and while the coffin was being lowered into the grave he played "The Children's Lament" – a tune taught to him by the deceased.... "Death of a well-known Champion Piper," *Oban Times*, 23/07/1898, p.2.

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