



Lament for Donald Bàn MacCrimmon

This tune is to be found in a number of published sources, including

- Uilleam Ross**, *Ross's Collection Pipe Music*, pp.34-40.
- David Glen**'s *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, 93-5.
- C. S. Thomason**'s *Ceol Mor*, pp.81-4.

These are reproduced below.

The tune also appears in the following manuscript sources, of which Donald MacDonald, Angus MacKay and Colin Cameron are reproduced either wholly or in part below:

- Donald MacDonald**'s MS, ff.64-72.
- Peter Reid**'s MS, f.59.
- Angus MacKay**'s MS, i, 85-87.
- Colin Cameron**'s MS, ff.41-44.
- Uilleam Ross**'s MS, ff.206-212.
- Robert Meldrum**'s MS, ff.117-122.

Uilleam Ross sets the ground in common time moving to 6/8 in var 1, 2/4 in var 2, and 6/8 in taorluath and crunluath. He marks the ground 'very slow':

11.
Very Slow.

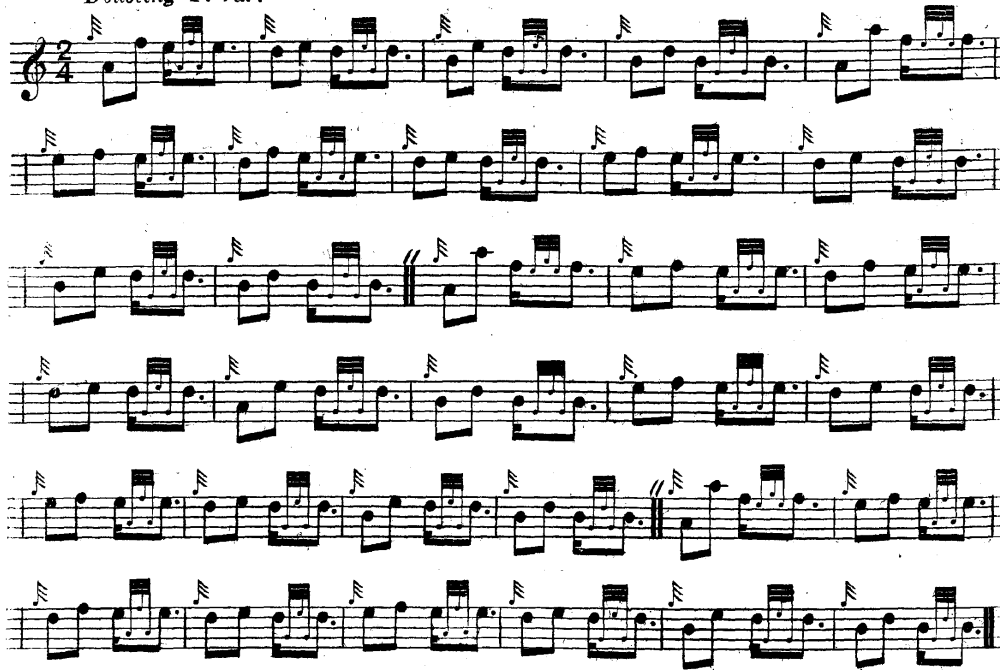
Doubling of the Ground.



1st Var.



35 *Doubling 1st Var.*



2nd Var.

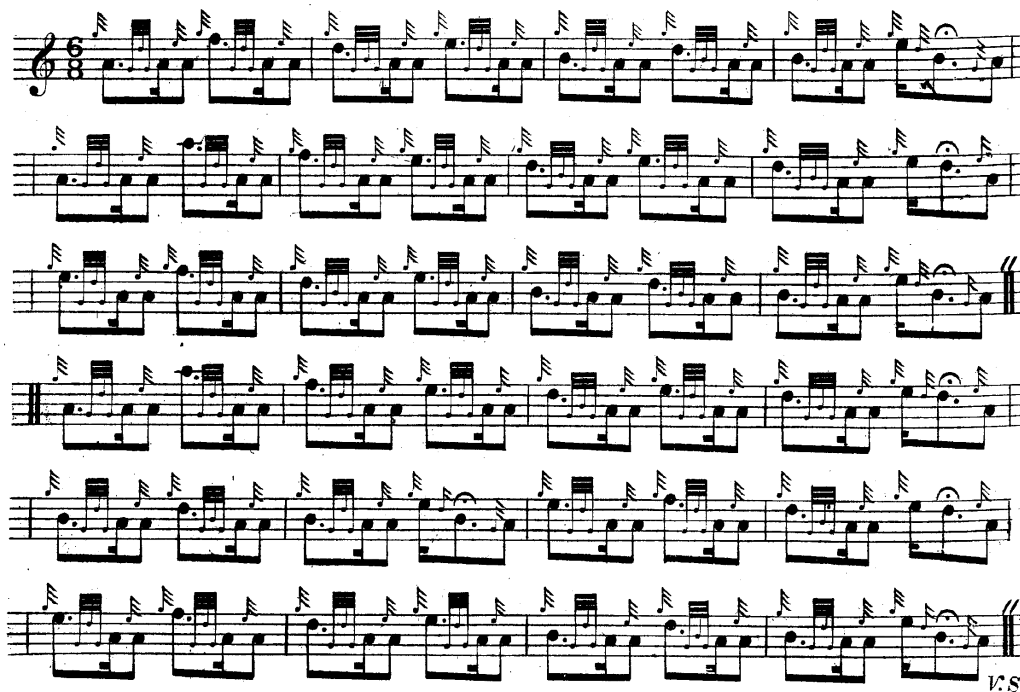


Doubling 2nd Var.

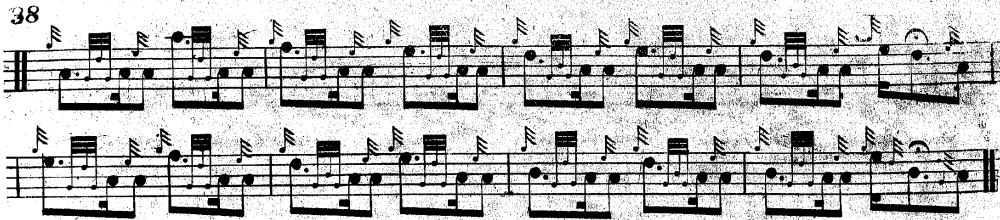
37



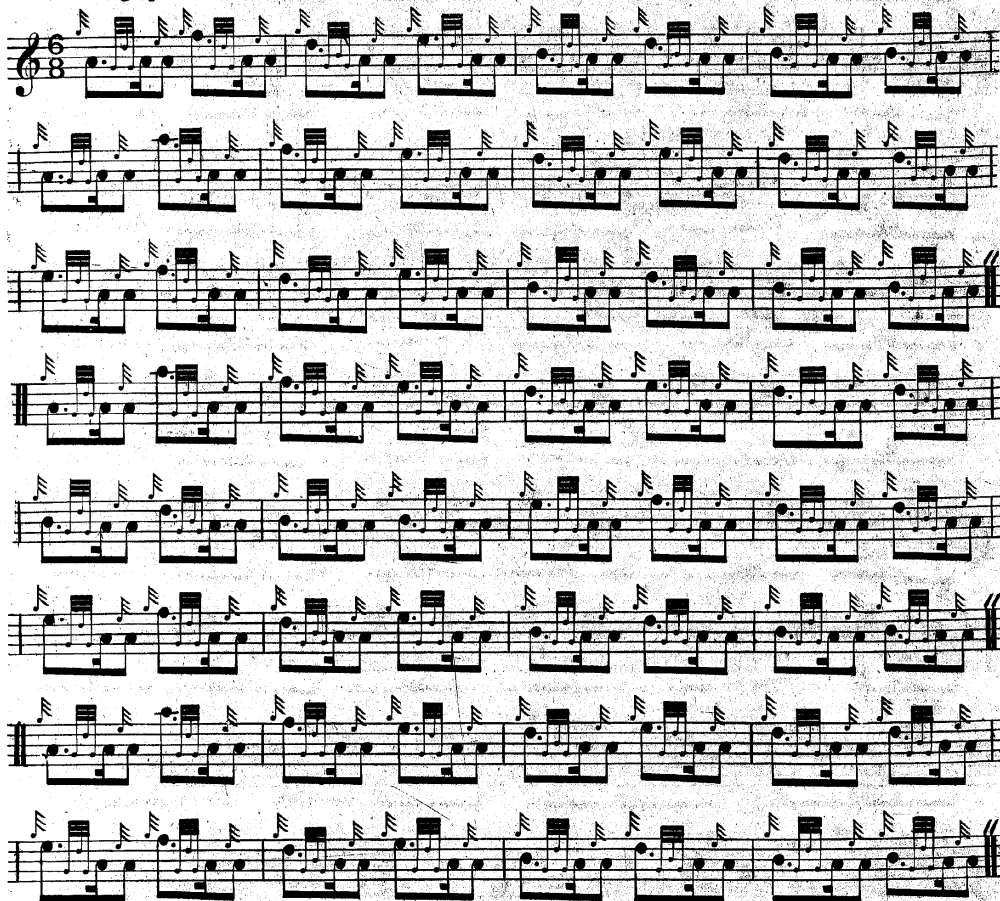
Taorluidh 3rd Var.



V.S

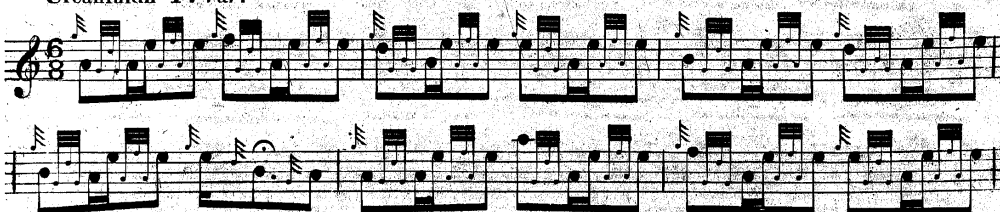


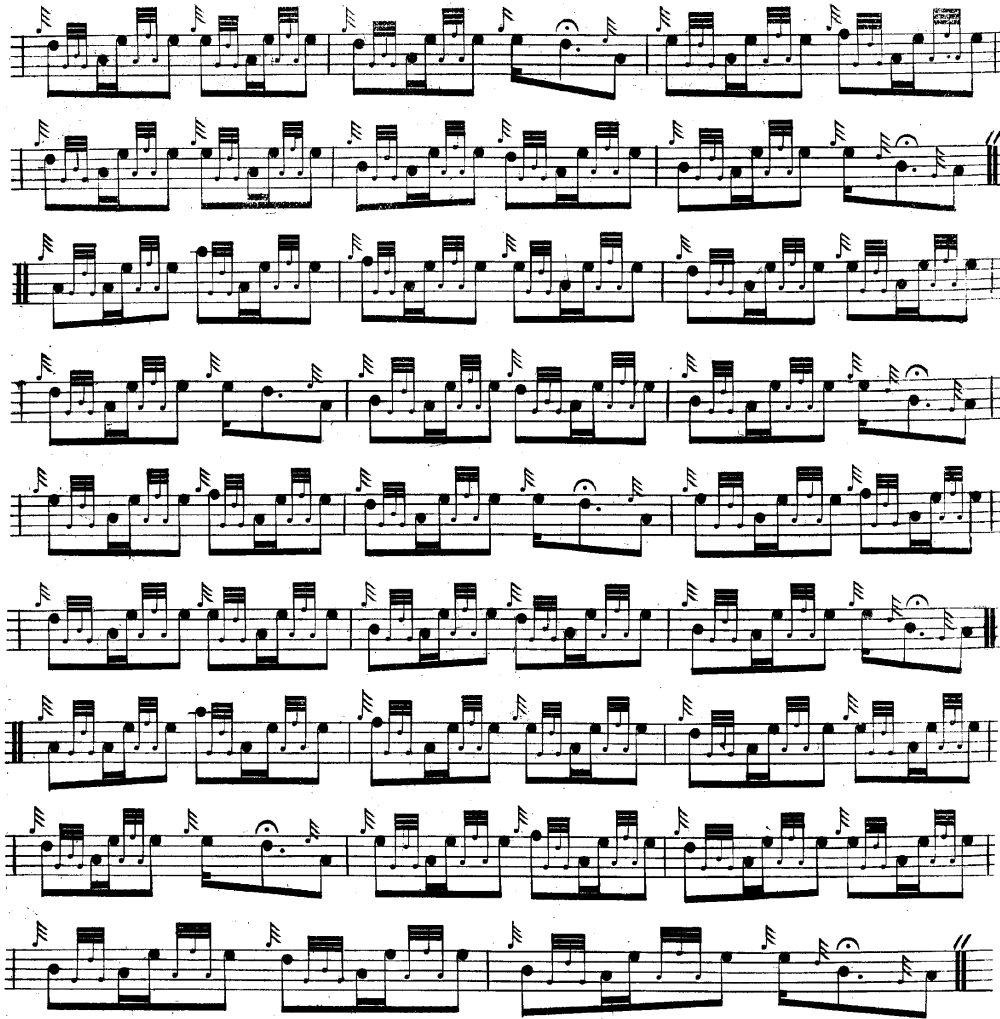
Doubling of 3rd Var:



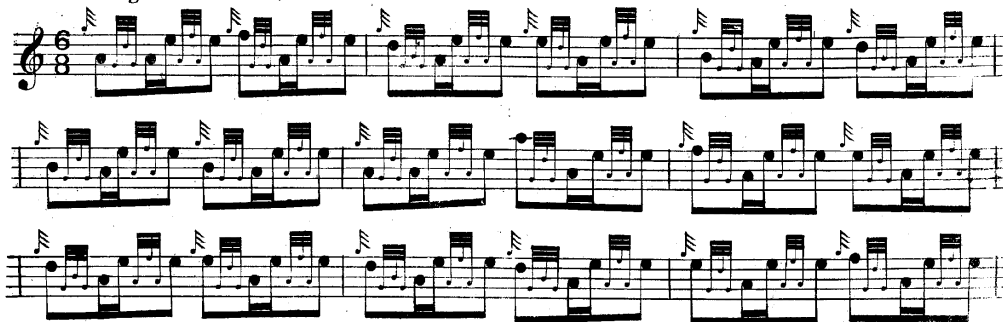
Creanluidh 4th Var:

D.C.

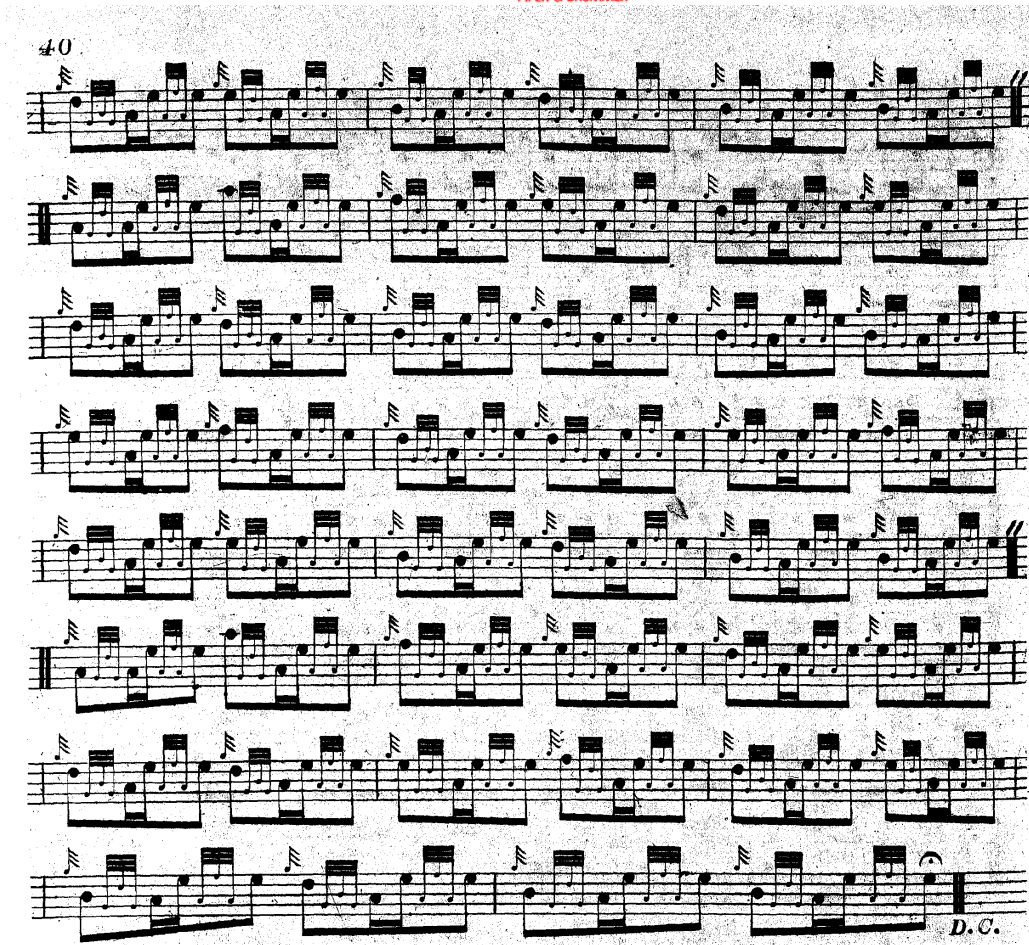




Doubling: 4th Var:



V.S.



Ross uses more than one style of eallach (see for example p.35 line 1), one of which is an obvious source for Archibald Campbell's later unattractive rationalisation of this movement and reduction of it to a single unchanging form. Note that Ross comes down to A rather than B at the beginning of bar 17 of the first and second variations (singling and doubling). Ross repeats the ground at the end of the taorluath and crunluath doublings and has no crunluath a mach.

David Glen marks the ground 'Moderately Slow' and sets it in 6/8. He pleasingly points the double echo beats with the accent on the initial quaver (except for the one on E, which makes a nice contrast). He times the first variation as John MacDonald played it, (while telling his pupils Bob Brown and Bob Nicol to time it as even quavers as per the recently published *Piobaireachd Society Collection* (second series, vol 2). He did not invoke PS2, just told them to do it, to their puzzlement—they preferred the way he himself played it, as timed by David Glen. Glen also gives MacKay's style beginning on B, as a footnote marked "The 1st. Bars as originally composed." He does the same thing as Ross with respect to bar 17 above. Glen repeats the ground at the end of the taorluath and crunluath doublings, and has no crunluath a mach:

DONALD BÀN MAC CRIMMON'S LAMENT.

CUMHA DHÒMHNUILL BHÀIN MHIC CRUIMEIN.

Ùrlar. Moderately Slow

41.

Dùblachadh an Ùrlair.

Var. 1st

The 1st Bars as originally composed.

Ùrlar and its Doubling. | Var. 1st and its Doubling. | Var. 2nd and its Doubling. | Taor-luath and its Doubling. | Crun-luath and its Doubling.

Doubling of Var. 1st



omit 2nd time.



Var. 2nd



omit 2nd time.



Doubling of Var. 2nd



omit 2nd time.



Taor-luath and its Doubling.



Crùn-luath and its Doubling.

Repeat the Ùrlar.

Repeat the Ùrlar.

General Thomason's tone row is interestingly different in the taorluath and crunluath variations thus: AFDEBDBB/AA'FEDEDD and in corresponding places. Ross does the same. Glen has AA'EFDEDD here. Thomason like Glen plays his eallach 'down'. He sets the ground in common time, moving to 6/8 for the doubling of the Ground, 2/4 for the first and second variations, and back to 6/8 for the taorluath and crunluath variations. Like Ross and

Glen, he repeats the ground at the end of the taorluath and crunluath variations, and has no a mach. He cites Donald MacDonald's MS and Uilleam Ross's book as his sources.

DONALD BAN MAC - CRUIMEIN - LAMENT FOR
1. 9. 12 6.

62. L.I.

3 Vi.

4 Vi.

6. VII.

7. VII.

8. VII.

9. VII.

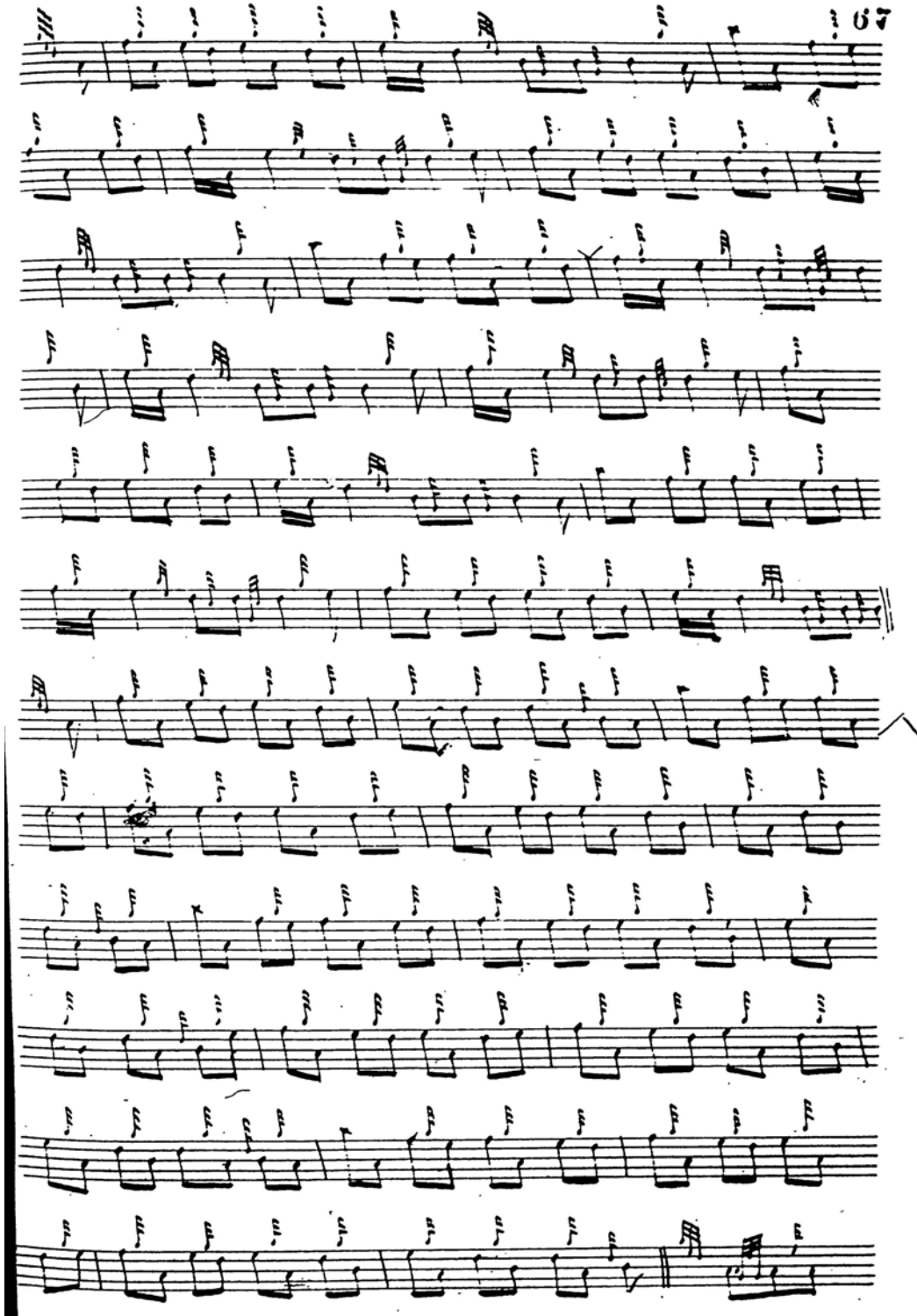
Li. 65.

Donald MacDonald has a nice little anacrusis at the beginning of his first variation, and his tone row is the same as Glens in the later variations. He does not direct that the ground be repeated after the taorluath and crunluath doublings; he has no crunluath a mach.

64 CAMÉNT FOR DONALD BAN. MACCRUIMEIN.













71

The image displays a page of musical notation for a bagpipe tune, specifically a Piobaireachd. The page is numbered 71 in the top right corner. The notation is written on 11 staves, each containing a series of notes, rests, and fingerings. The notes are primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets and sixteenth-note runs. The fingerings are indicated by small numbers (1-5) above the notes. The notation is in a standard musical staff format, with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The overall style is that of a traditional musical score, with a focus on the rhythmic and melodic patterns of the bagpipe.



Angus MacKay has an interesting approach to the tonality of the opening phrase, which is echoed in Peter Reid's score but not in any of the others. The B is restated in appropriate positions throughout the tune, and is rather attractive in playing:

Cumha Dhonnhuill Bhain Mhic Crummin

95

Donald Bain Mac Crummin's Lament

1746



And so on, through to a taorluath and crunluath singling and doubling. As it stands the text is clearly unrevised, there are missing *dal segno* marks and the instructions *vis a vis* first and

second repeats are not clear, but enough has been given above hopefully to give some idea of the MacKay version. The ground is directed to be repeated after the taorluath and crunluath doublings (with the characteristic MacKay "B" opening in each case) and there is no crunluath a mach.

Peter Reid starts the tune on B as MacKay does, and is otherwise very like Glen in his timing. Print-through from adjacent pages has muddled the text and prevents reproduction here. Reid gives the ground only.

Colin Cameron, as usual, shows some interesting points of style: for example in the way he doesn't cut "up" before the cadences in his second variation singling:



Colin Cameron's tone row in the taorluath and crunluath variations is the same as Thomason's. His score ends at taorluath doubling with the instruction "Crunluadh to be taken off[f] Taorluadh" so it is not clear whether he intended the ground to be repeated after the taorluath and crunluath doublings.

Uilleam Ross's MS setting adds nothing significant to the material presented above.

Robert Meldrum's setting follows Thomason's tone row; does not repeat the ground at the end of the taorluath and crunluath doublings and has no crunluath a mach.

Commentary

The notes to Donald MacDonald's unpublished second volume say: "This long and grand piece, was composed by his brother, in the Isle of Skye, when he heard that Donald was killed, at the battle of Culloden in 1746. This is the most plaintive Piobaireachd perhaps, now on record."

Actually, Donald Bàn was killed at the Rout of Moy a couple of days before Culloden when a government snatch party led out from Inverness by the young Laird of MacLeod tried to seize Charles Edward Stuart under cover of night while he was staying at Moy Hall with Lady Anne MacIntosh. The Jacobites were alerted, and in the confusion Donald MacCrimmon was shot dead. There is a full and interesting account of the machinations which lay behind this in Ruairidh Halford MacLeod's, "Everyone who has an intrigue hopes it should not be known: Lord Loudon and Anne Mackintosh—An Intrigue of the '45," in Transactions of the Gaelic



Society of Inverness, (vol. 55, 1986-8, pp.256-323), revealing that the commander of the northern government forces, the Earl of Loudon, was carrying on an illicit amour with "Colonel" Anne, quite undisturbed by political difference, or the Rising of 1745 which was going on at full tilt all around them.

There are additional details of Donald Bàn, including his liaison with the poet Sheila MacLeod and their son, Peter, who became a surgeon/barber in Edinburgh, in a little-known article in the short-lived 1930s periodical *Piping and Dancing* based on the researches of Mrs. Osbalston Mitford, one of the several vice-presidents of the MacCrimmon Society. It is entitled "The MacCrimmon Pipers: Further Discoveries Among the Dunvegan Manuscripts. Communicated by G. C., B. Poulter, F.S.A. Scot. Hon. Secretary of the MacCrimmon Society":

It will be remembered by many that in the summer of 1938, Mrs Osbalston Mitford, a daughter of the late Canon Roderick MacLeod, of MacLeod, brought to light several new items concerning the famous MacCrimmon composers during her researches among the Dunvegan manuscripts. Mrs Mitford has recently continued these investigations and has kindly sent the results to the MacCrimmon Society, of which she is a Vice-president. Many readers of "Piping and Dancing" will be interested to learn the extent of these additions, of which I will give a brief summary. The earliest items refer, to Padruig og MacCrimmon, who was hereditary piper to MacLeod from 1670 to 1723 or later. In 1706 "Patrick MacCrimmon MacLeod's Piper" was paid 228 merks "as token promised him by MacLeod and attested by his friends." In or about that year Padruig married a second time. In 1711 two bagpipes were bought for "McCrummen MacLeod's Principal Pyper" for £30, and in 1714 Mac Leod paid £57 to Patrick Morison, merchant of Edinburgh, "for livery cloaths to McCrummen, McLeod's Pyper." In the Skye rentals of 1721-3 Patrick MacCrummen MacLeod's principal piper was- paid 165 merks a year in fees.

Turning to the Harris Rentals, Donald MacCrummen , piper in Harris, was paid an annual salary of £26 from 1732 to 1738 when it was raised to £33, continuing at the higher figure until 1744. This suggests that of Padruig Og's two most brilliant sons, Malcolm presided over the. Borreraig College, and Donald Ban was piper in Harris until he accompanied his chief on the ill-fated expedition which ended in 1746 with Donald's death at the rout of Moy. Unfortunately the Rent Rolls are missing for two years from 1744. Then in 1747 the accounts begin payment of £100 to "Donald MacCrimmon's relict," [widow] in 1748 £50 as "Charity to McCrummen's relict" and in 1749 "Your honour's bounty to widow McKriman" of another £50, whilst so late as 1772-3 there is an annual payment of £10 to MacCrimmon's widow in Harris." Mrs Mitford informs us that there exists a very good signature of Donald in 1732. This cannot belong to Donald Ban's illiterate brother Donald Donn, who ultimately succeeded to Borreraig, and I feel sure the writer was Donald Ban himself, who therefore appears to have been MacLeod's piper in Harris. How can we reconcile the payment of the pension to a widow with Sheila MacLeod's declaration that "I was chief of the bards and my sweetheart was Donald Bain MacCrimmon, the finest piper in the Western Isles. Beside the chief was my lover with the great pipes under his arm," in the story of the expedition to Moy told in the Innes Manuscript (reprinted in the *London Scottish Gazette*, April, 1911) Then in 1757 Donald Ban's "lawful son" Peter was apprenticed to a surgeon-barber in Edinburgh, and as Scottish law required nothing more than a mutual declaration of consent before witnesses to constitute marriage. I think it may be presumed that Peter the surgeon-barber was born...of a recently contracted "handfasting" union between Donald Ban MacCrimmon and Sheila MacLeod.

We now learn that it was between 1723 and 1737 that Padruig Og was succeeded as hereditary piper by his eldest son "Malcolm Crummen," and in the latter year began paying



the "rent of Boreraig," amounting to £66 13s 4d, which was the same amount as the salary he received from MacLeod. In 1755 Malcolm appears to have been in arrears, and paid only £34. Sometime between 1755 and 1769 Malcolm was succeeded by his son Iain Dubh, whose tenure only lasted fourteen years at the most.

Mrs Mitford's valuable notes also give us more details of Peter MacCrimmon, son of Padruig Og. Born about 1712, he appears to have begun life as a boat-builder and dealer; in 1740 there was payment of £4 to Peter MacKrimman for tar and iron used in constructing a boat, and in 1743 as "Peter MacCrimmon, merchant" he was paid for wood and mill stones. About 1742 he seems to have lent the MacLeod estate one thousand merks, and in 1762 he is described as an innkeeper and whisky-monger at Struan. We know that at a still later date he helped his nephew with the management of Borraeraig Piping School.

Iain Dubh MacCrimmon (1730-1822) appears from 1750 onwards, and in 1773—after he had left Borraeraig—he was (as John McCrumen, piper) given a "deduction of his rent by MacLeod's order." [...]

Piping and Dancing, Vol.6, no.3, November 1940, pp.10-11.

The poet Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair seems greatly to have relished pipe music. Indeed his poem "*Moladh air Piob-Mhor Mhic Cruimein*," is thought to have been made in praise of Donald Bàn's pipes. It is too long to be quoted entire, but the following verses give some idea of his flavour:

I love to hear at morn
Thy throat's glad piercing tone,
The vital breath
Passing through every drone,
From whence the strong
Congenial music grows,
Tuneful, light, sweet,
In stately measure flows;
[...] To me, when the standard floats,
Thy chanter's shout gives pleasure,
Sighing thy bold variations
Through every lively measure;
The war note intent on rending,
White fingers deft are pounding
To hack both marrow and muscles
With thy shrill cry resounding;
[...] You shamed the harp,
Like untuned fiddle's tone,
Dull strains for maids
And men grown old and done:
Better thy shrill blast
From gamut brave and gay,
Rousing up men to the destructive fray;



Thy loud voiced grace-notes,
When banners are unfurled,
Surpass all other
Music in the world.
[...]When struck erect,
Thy spouse's arm beneath,
Through thy slender, handsome mouthpiece
Thy bag is filled with breath;
Fingers displayed all quivering,
Skipping freely in their haste
On the tuneful dark-brown chanter,
Sweet the chattering from that breast;
[...]Holy Mary! how I love thee,
McCrimmon's wife, so virtuous and fair;
To me the spouse of George
Does not with thee compare
In spotless robes full of joyous breath,
Not jealous in her charms,
Kissed by thy loving mate
And fondled in his arms;
Fain would I hear thy notes,
Even till life goes by,
War song and strains of my heart,
Thou splendid dame from Skye."

(A. MacDonald and A. MacDonald, eds., *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald (Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair)*, Inverness 1924, pp.57-67)

There is a note from **Willie Ross**, dated "The Castle, Edinburgh, 20/11/27," in Archibald Campbell's editorial files in the National Library of Scotland when the latter was editing this tune for the *Piobaireachd Society Collection (second series)*. This indicates that Willie was taught it by his great uncle, Aeneas Rose, at Blair Athol, and also had it from Sandy Cameron. He says: "I do agree that Donald Ban be in 6/8. I also enclose 3 ways of putting it on paper it may help you a little. Its a hard job writing Piobaireachd, and I am sure you will be very tired of it." (MS 22098, ff.110-12).

R. B. Nicol won the Oban medal with this tune. "He played a very sweet pipe which was rather weak for the open air but it was a fine rendering" noted the *Oban Times* (18/09/1930, p.3). He was to play the tune again at the grave of his teacher, John MacDonald of Inverness, at Cluny Hill Cemetery, Forres, on 8th June, 1953.

* * *

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