



MacLeod of MacLeod's Lament

There are settings of this tune in the following manuscript:

--**Robert Meldrum's** MS, ff.221-223 (with the title "Lament for Sir Rory Mor MacLeod of MacLeod")

And in the following published sources:

--**Angus MacKay's** *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.131-4

--**Donald MacPhee's** *Collection of Piobaireachd*, ii, 11-14

--**C. S. Thomason's** *Ceol Mor*, pp.165-6

--**David Glen's** *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.51-3

--**William Stewart**, *Piobaireachd Society Collection* (first series), ii, 1-4


--**G. F. Ross**, *MacCrimmon and Other Piobaireachd*, pp.26-7


The earliest source is **Angus MacKay's** published book. The tune is a four lined even one, with eight bars in each of the parts, as the second variation doubling implies. In MacKay's setting the end of the first line is an eallach short:

CUMHA CHEANNCINNIDH NA'N LEODAICH.
Mac Leod of Mac Leod's Lament.

Composed by

Mac Crummen.

LI. 

Variation 1. 

132

Doubling of Variation 1.

Variation 2.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "A Thread of Pride and Self Esteem". The score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. It begins with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The first section, labeled "Doubling of Variation 1.", consists of 16 measures of music. This is followed by a double bar line and the second section, labeled "Variation 2.", which also consists of 16 measures. The notation includes various rhythmic values (eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes), rests, and dynamic markings (p, f, mf, ff). The piece concludes with a double bar line.

And so on.

Donald MacPhee made good this obvious slip in the second volume of his published collection, and most later editors followed MacPhee:

Var. 1st Sigbhal.

Doubling of Var. 1st

Tripline

The musical score consists of ten staves. The first five staves feature a melodic line with triplets and eighth notes. The sixth staff is labeled "Doubling of Tripling." and the remaining five staves show a more complex rhythmic pattern with many triplets and sixteenth notes.

Yan Shi ...

Doubling of Taorluath.

D. C. Thema

Crunluatl..

Doubling of Crunluatl.

D. C. Thema.

The image displays three staves of musical notation. The first staff is labeled 'Crunluatl..' and contains a single melodic line. The second staff is labeled 'Doubling of Crunluatl.' and contains a single melodic line. The third staff is labeled 'D. C. Thema.' and contains a single melodic line. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 4/4. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and accidentals.



David Glen published his setting of The "Lament for MacLeod of MacLeod" in his second volume, about 1895/6, so that his score predates General Thomason's by some years. Glen treats the tune as follows, directing, as MacPhee and Thomason do, that the ground be repeated following the taorluath and crunluath doublings:

MACLEOD OF MACLEOD'S LAMENT.

CUMHA CHINN-CINNIDH NAN LEÒDACH.

Composed by
Mac Crimmon.

Ùrlar.

22

twice

1st

2nd

Var. 1st

twice

1st

2nd

Doubling of Var. 1st Quicker.

twice

1st

2nd

Var. 2nd

twice

And so on.

General Thomason treats the tune very similarly:

MACLEOD OF MACLEOD — LAMENT FOR.

This musical score is for the tune 'MacLeod of MacLeod — Lament For.' It consists of three systems of staves. The first system has three staves, the second has two, and the third has two. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines. On the right side, there are two vertical columns of staves, labeled 'CVI.' and '165.'.

This block contains the continuation of the musical score. It features two main systems of staves. The first system has two staves, and the second has two. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines. On the left side, there are two vertical columns of staves, labeled '166. CVI.' and '4 VII.'.

Thomason indicates that his version was Donald Cameron's way of the tune and his score also seems close to MacPhee and Glen. Throughout most of its existence, the "Lament for MacLeod of MacLeod" seems to have been an extremely stable tune.

But in November 1990 this situation changed rather suddenly. According to the notes to this tune in the *Piobaireachd Society Collection* (second series), xv, 513, published that year, there were three different ways of timing the ground of this tune: two proposed by General Thomason, and a third by William Stewart of Ensay, editor of the *Piobaireachd Society Collection* (first series). Ensay's setting was favoured by Archibald Campbell and published



in the *Kilberry Book*. The note referred the reader to *Further Side Lights on the Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor*, p.60 where it was stated that there had been "a controversy regarding this tune between General Thomason and Major Stewart of Ensay" which "was possibly at the bottom of most of the trouble which led to the partial break up of the Piobaireachd Society in 1905." However, there is no evidence to support this speculation, either in the Piobaireachd Society's own papers, or in the contemporary press. The Society's records show clearly that Thomason was deposed as president not because of any disagreement about the timing of a particular tune but because of a major schism within the Society between those who favoured Thomason's revolutionary new shorthand notation which held promise of making all the music freely available to everybody, and those, led by Stewart of Ensay and his ally the Earl of Dunmore, who favoured the Donald MacDonald/Angus MacKay style of notation which entailed few and expensive texts, and a continuing prominent role in piobaireachd, therefore, for the wealthy, book-owning people who had formed the Victorian judging class. The Ensay faction sprang a motion to this effect at the AGM at the Station Hotel at Oban on Thursday 15th September 1904. They managed to vote down a hastily contrived counter-motion by Thomason's supporters, whereupon Thomason was deposed as president of the Piobaireachd Society and most of the founding members resigned in protest. There is a detailed account of these events based on the Society's own records and contemporary newspaper correspondence in *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society* (Tuckwell Press, 2000). Thomason was deposed in 1904, not 1905 as stated by Archibald Campbell in *Further Sidelights*.

James Campbell and Archibald Kenneth state in their notes to Piobaireachd Society Volume 15, that "In other collections where this tune appears [...] Glen and MacPhee follow Ceol Mor." But this is unlikely since MacPhee and Glen pre-date *Ceol Mor* and therefore were more likely to have influenced Thomason than the other way around.

A further difficulty created by James Campbell and Archibald Kenneth is that they give two different versions of line one of the ground of "Lament for MacLeod of MacLeod" and attribute both to C. S. Thomason. But only one setting of the ground appears in *Ceol Mor* and Campbell and Kenneth do not indicate the whereabouts of their second setting.

William Stewart in the *Piobaireachd Society Collection* (first series) is the source of the version of "Lament for MacLeod of MacLeod" published by Archibald Campbell in *The Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor* and by his son, James, in the *Piobaireachd Society Collection* (second series), vol. 15. Stewart states:

This Piobaireachd was composed by Patrick Mor MacCrimmon on the death of the chief, Sir Roderick Macleod of Macleod, in 1626. Angus MacKay, in his note to the tune, gives the Gaelic verses composed by MacCrimmon to the *urlar*, and the well-known air to which they are sung afforded a clue to replacing the missing notes in the first part of the ground, as given by MacKay. The omission is unaccountable as the missing notes are correctly given by MacKay in the second part of the *urlar*. Their insertion in the first part is in accordance with what appears to be a fairly general rule in Piobaireachd, viz.:--that the second or last part of the ground, which is often a variation on the high notes, returns to the original theme in the closing bars. [ii, "Notes"]

Stewart times the ground as follows. The reader will note that the eallach is played "down":

Cumha Ceann-Cinnidh nan Leodach

(MacLeod of MacLeod's Lament).



G. F. Ross calls the tune "Lament for Sir Rory Mor MacLeod. (1626)," and follows Piobaireachd Society first series in the ground. He points the siubhal "down" (although stating in an interesting footnote that it can be timed either way), and develops the tune to a crunluath fosgailte conclusion, presumably to balance the taorluath fosgailte which precedes it, dropping the duinte taorluath variations. This produces, some might think, a better proportioned, more shapely tune. Ross also plays the eallach "down," and explains why in the following note:

The double beat on A should be played as written herein and should not on any account be rushed as some modern publications [i.e the Piobaireachd Society's Second Series] would indicate. This rushing of the beat is often due to overdwelling on the E of the GED cadence often preceding it. Therefore, when seeking for the rhythmic swing of a tune, find the rhythm of the double beat on A by the omission of the cadence. It will be found the three A's must be distinctly heard to complete the rhythm and the insertion, later, of a correctly played cadence before the beat will not upset it." Concerning the timing of cadence notes he said "It should be remembered that the GED cadence is, in almost every case, merely an introductory run to the themal note, and the E is not, in itself, themal. Therefore, though the E should be distinctly heard, it must not detract from the themal note to which it is an introduction, and should not in any case override it or upset the rhythm." (*MacCrimmon and Other Piobaireachd*, "A word to the player" section, no pagination).

Ross times the tune as follows:

Bar Nos.	9 13	10 14	11 4 7 15	12 4 8 16
(1) Ground.				
(2) Siubhal.				
(3) Doubling*				

Some prefer to accent the second note, rather than the first of each couplet. The method as written is recommended.

Donald Mor MacCrimmon

Nos.	1 4 6 9 13	2 4 6 10 14	8 4 7 11 15	3 4 8 12 16

Taobhludh Fosgailte.

(5) Doubling.

(6) Creanludh Fosgailte (Singling*) (7) Doubling (as printed)



Commentary:

In his note to this tune in Angus MacKay's *Ancient Piobaireachd*, James Logan says:

"This was composed on Sir Roderick MacLeod of Dunvegan, commonly called Ruairidh Mor, who built the old tower at Dunvegan, and died in 1626. Thus sang MacCrummen when leaving Dunvegan castle for Boreraig.

Tog orm mo Phiob s' theid mi dhachaidh
S' duilich leam fhein mar a thachair
Tog orm mo Phiob's mi air mo chràdh
Ma Ruairidh mòr, Ma Ruairidh mor.
Tog orm mo Phiob thà mi sgith'
'S mar faigh mi i theid mi dhachaidh
Tog orm mo Phiob tha mi sgith
'S mi air mo Chràdh ma Ruairidh mòr.
Tog orm mo Phiob tha mi sgith,
'S mar faigh mi i theid mi dhachaidh
Clarsach na Piob cha tog mo chridhe,
Cha bheò fear mo ghràidh Ruairidh mòr.

("Historical and Traditional notes on the Piobaireachds," p.12)

Fionn's note in David Glen's *Ancient Piobaireachd* is an abbreviated version of an article he wrote for the *Oban Times* on 30/06/1906, p.3, the year this tune was first set by the Piobaireachd Society. Fionn describes it as "...the historic lament for Sir Roderick MacLeod, better known as 'Ruairidh Mor.' Patrick Mor MacCrimmon was piper at Dunvegan in 1626, when news came that Ruairidh Mor had died in Forres. When he heard the sad news, Patrick Mor felt that Dunvegan and its halls had lost all their charms, and that he could no longer remain within its walls. He got up, shouldered his pipes, and marched off to his own home at Borreraig, consoling his grief by playing as he went, a lament for the departed Ruairidh, which is one of the most melodious and plaintive pipe tunes we possess. The Gaelic words associated with the lament are preserved, and are still sung to a vocal setting of the 'ùrlar,' or groundwork, of the tune, which I took down from the singing of an old Skye woman in Glasgow many years ago. It is interesting to note that this vocal setting has been the means of enabling modern editors to make up a correct setting of the 'ùrlar'—that given by Angus MacKay being lacking in symmetry. The following is the vocal setting referred to:

CUMHA RUAIRIDH MHOIR

(RORY MOR'S LAMENT).

KEY E♭. *Slowly, with much feeling.*

{ . d : r, m | l : -. l : s, m | s, d : -. }
Tog orm mo phlob is theid mi dhachaidh,

{ . d : r, m | l : -. d : r, m | r, d : -. }
Is truagh leam fhéin mo léir mar thachair

{ . d : r, m | l : -. l : s, l | d' : -. }
Tog orm mo phlob 's mi air mo chràdh,

{ . d' : r, d' | l : -. s : m, r | r : -. }
Mu Ruairidh Mór, mu Ruairidh Mór.

Tog orm mo phlob—tha mi sgith,
'S mar faigh mi i theid mi dhachaidh;
Tog orm mo phlob—tha mi sgith,
'S mi air mo chràdh mu Ruairidh Mór.

Tog orm mo phlob—tha mi sgith,
'S mar faigh mi i theid mi dhachaidh;
'Clàrsach no piob cha tog mo chridh',
Ona bhead fear mo ghràidh, Ruairidh Mór.

The following English rendering may
interest your non-Gaelic readers:—

RORY MOR'S LAMENT.

Give me my pipes, I'll home them carry
In these sad halls I dare not tarry;
My pipes hand o'er, my heart is sore
For Rory Mor, my Rory Mor.

Fetch me my pipes—my heart is breaking,
For Rory Mor his rest is taking;
He wakes no more, and to its core
My heart is sore for Rory Mor.

Hand me my pipes—I'm sad and weary,
These halls are silent, dark and eerie;
The pipe no more cheers as of yore —
Thy race is o'er, brave Rory Mor!

Fionn continues, "Rory Mor was an extremely able man, and succeeded in extricating himself and his clan from difficulties of a very serious nature. He was the first of his family who could write, the earlier chiefs all signed their names 'with my hande led at ye pene of the notar,' and he is said to have been the last Highland chief who continued to write in the language of his fathers."

Style: if playing MacPhee, one should time the siubhal smoothly and evenly, and avoid being exaggerated and jerky, remembering Lt. John McLellan's strictures about "the braying of the ass" (and the same applies to Glen's score). Watch MacPhee's timing of the taorluath fosgailte: he gives it in the square 4/4 MacKay style, and has difficulty accommodating the cadences to the rhythmical flow; Thomason sensibly sticks to 2/4 here and his timing is consequently a lot more idiomatic, and if playing MacPhee/Thomason, it seems better to stick with Thomason at this point.



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