

Lament for the Harp Tree

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

- **Colin Campbell's** "Nether Lorn Canntaireachd," ii, 112-116 (with the title "McLeod's Lament");
- **Donald MacDonald's** Manuscript, ff.207-215 (with the title "Lament for the Tree of Hundreds");
- **Peter Reid's** manuscript, ff.3-4;
- **Donald MacDonald jnr.'s** manuscript, f.30;
- **C. S. Thomason's** manuscript, f.24;
- **D. S. MacDonald's** manuscript, ii, 42ff;

and in the following published sources:

- **Angus MacKay's** *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.85-8;
- **David Glen's** *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, 140-3;
- **C. S. Thomason's** *Ceol Mor*, pp.181-4;
- **William Stewart, et.al., eds.,** *The Piobaireachd Society Collection*, (first series) iii, 14-17;
- **G. F. Ross,** *A Collection of MacCrimmon and other piobaireachd*, pp.30-33.

Colin Campbell sets the tune as follows:

hio bandre che bandre 112

51 Called M Seed Lament (The First)

1. Hohiodro chehoche heeche IheD hohiodro
chehoche hehoche horōdin heeche cheho
che hohiodro hioenem chehoche hohiodro
hioemto hiharun ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

2. Hohiodro chehoche heeche IheD hohiodro
chehoche hehoche horōdin heeche cheho
che hohiodro hioenem IheD heeche chehoche
horōdin hio dro dreho hioenem ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

3. Havecheo horōdin heeche chehoche hohiodro
hioenem IheD chehoche chehoD heeche che
hoche hohiodro hioenem ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

4. Havecheo horōdin hio dro dreho hioenem
hooendo hio dro dre heeche horōdin himDe
dre hee cheho cheve hoe hioenem hee
have cheho hioe hooemto hiharun ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

5. ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ First Motion ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

1. Hooendo cheho hioe hee hoe Ihe cheD
hooendo cheho hioe hee hoe hoen hee ho
ve cheho hioe hooendo hioem cheho
hioe hooendo hioenemto hiharun ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

2. Hooendo cheho hioe hee hoe Ihe cheD hoo
endo cheho hioe hee hoe hoen hee hooe
cheho hioe hooendo hioem Ihe cheD
hee hooe cheho hioe hoen hio din hioche
hioem ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

113

3rd Hoodrae hoen hee hove cheho hioe hoon
 = dro hioem Ihe chee hee hove cheho che
 = ve cheho chee hee hove cheho hioe hoo
 = endro hioem

4th Hoodrae hoen hioe din hioe dro hioem ho
 = oendo hioe droe hee de hoen him de dre
 hee heho cheve hoe hioemem hee hove
 cheho hioe hioem to hihar in

5th Hioe dro cheho che hee hee Ihe I hioe dro
 cheho che heho che hoen hee hee cheho
 che ho hioe dro hioem cheho che hioe ho
 dro hioem to hihar in

6th Hioe dro cheho che hee hee Ihe I hioe
 = dro cheho che heho che hoen hee hee
 cheho che hioe dro hioem Ihe I hee hee
 cheho che hoen hioe droen hioem

7th Hioe hoen hee hee cheho che ho hioe dro
 hioem Ihe I hee hee cheho che cheho I
 hee hee cheho che hioe dro hioem

8th Hioe hoen hioe droen hioem hioe dro
 hioe droe hee de hoen him de dre hee hee
 cheo dro hioem hee ho cheho hioe hioe din
 = tro hihar in

9th Taolive

10th Ho da rid do che da rid de he da rid de I da
 rid I ho da rid do che da rid de he da rid do
 hoen he da rid de che da rid de ho da
 (rid)

114

ziddo kioem chedariade hodariado hioa
bemto hiharim ~~~~~

2^a Hodariado chedariade hedariade Idariad
hodariado chedariade hedariado hoen
hedariadhe chedariade hodariado hioem
Idariad hedariadhe chedariade hoen
hioariado hioem ~~~~~

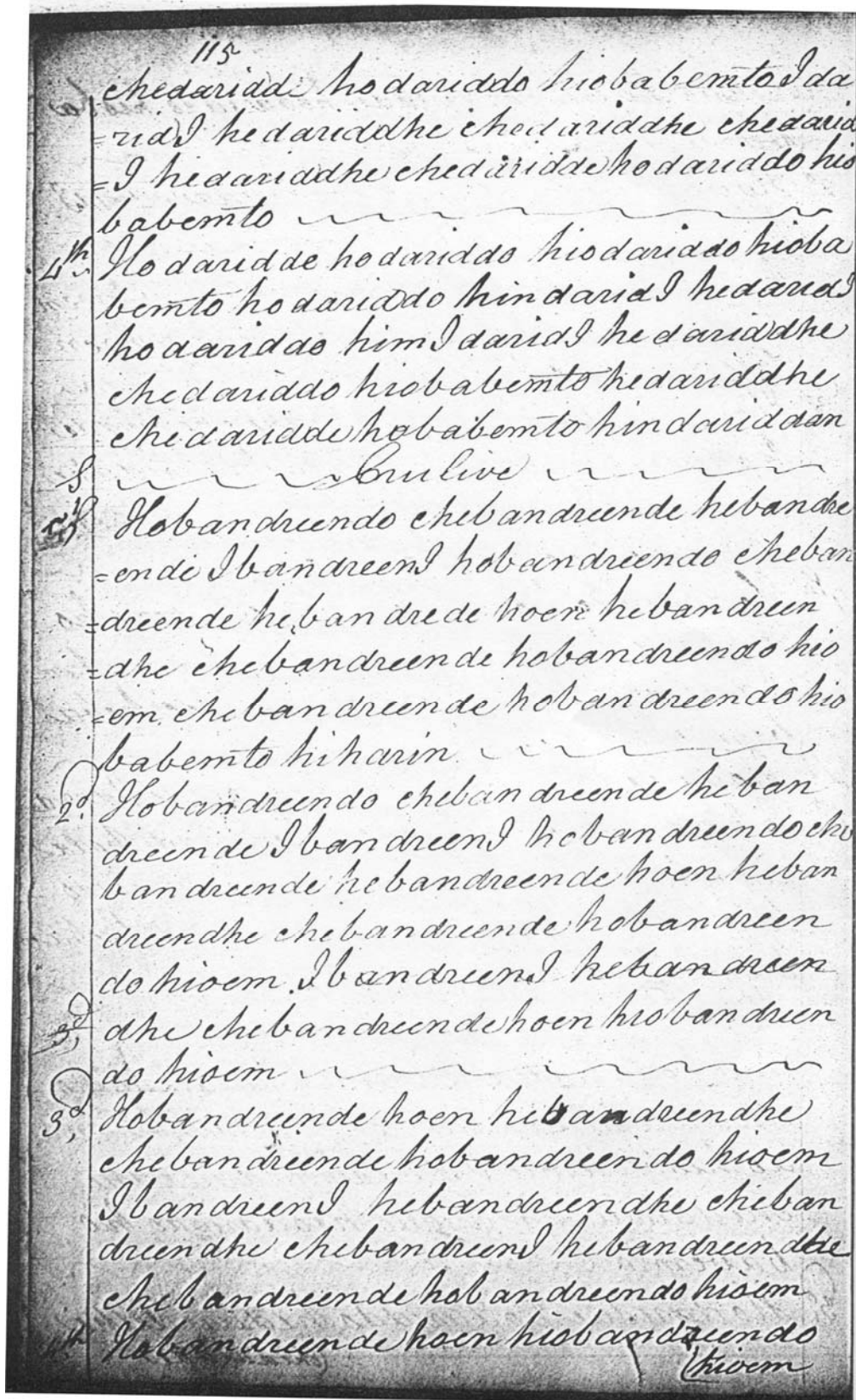
3^a Hodariade hoen hedariadhe chedariade
hodariado hioem Idariad hedariadhe
chedariadhe chedariad hedariadhe che
dariade hodariado hioem ~~~~~

4^a Hodariade hoen hioariado hioem ho
dariado hioariad hedariad hoen hioem
^{hedariadhe chedariado hioem}
Idariad hedariadhe chedariade hoba
bemto hiharim ~~~~~

5^a Hodariado chedariade hedariade Idariad
6^a Hodariado chedariade hedariade hoda
riado hedariadhe chedariade hodariado
hiobabemto chedariade hodariado hioa
bemto hindariadan ~~~~~

7^a Hodariado chedariade hedariade Idariad
hodariado chedariade hedariade ho
dariado hedariadhe chedariade hodari
do hioabemto Idariad hedariadhe
chedariade hodariado hioariado hio
babemto ~~~~~

8^a Hodariade hodariado hedariadhe
(chedariade)



116
 hioem hob andreen do hinb andreen heb an
 = dreen I hoen him I ban dreen I heb andreen
 dhe cheb andreen do hioem heb andreen
 dhe cheb andreen de hio b am dreen to
 hi h arin ~~~~~
 2^a Hob andreen do cheb andreen de heb andreen
 = de I ban dreen I hob andreen do cheb andreen
 = de heb andreen de hob an dreen do heb andreen
 = en dhe cheb andreen de hob andreen do hio b a
 = bem to cheb andreen de hob andreen do hio
 = b a b em to hinb an dreen dan ~~~~~
 3^a Hob andreen do cheb andreen de heb andreen
 = de I ban dreen I hob andreen do cheb an
 = dreen de heb andreen de hob andreen do he
 = b andreen dhe cheb andreen de hob andreen
 = do hio b am dreen to I ban dreen I heb an
 = dreen dhe cheb andreen de hob andreen do
 hio b an dreen do hio b am dreen to ~~~~~
 4^a Hob andreen de hob andreen do hio b an dreen
 = do hio b am dreen to hob andreen do
 hinb andreen I heb andreen I hob andreen
 = endo him I ban dreen I heb andreen dhe che
 = b andreen do hio b am dreen to heb andreen
 dhe cheb andreen de hio b am dreen to hin
 b an dreen dan ~~~~~

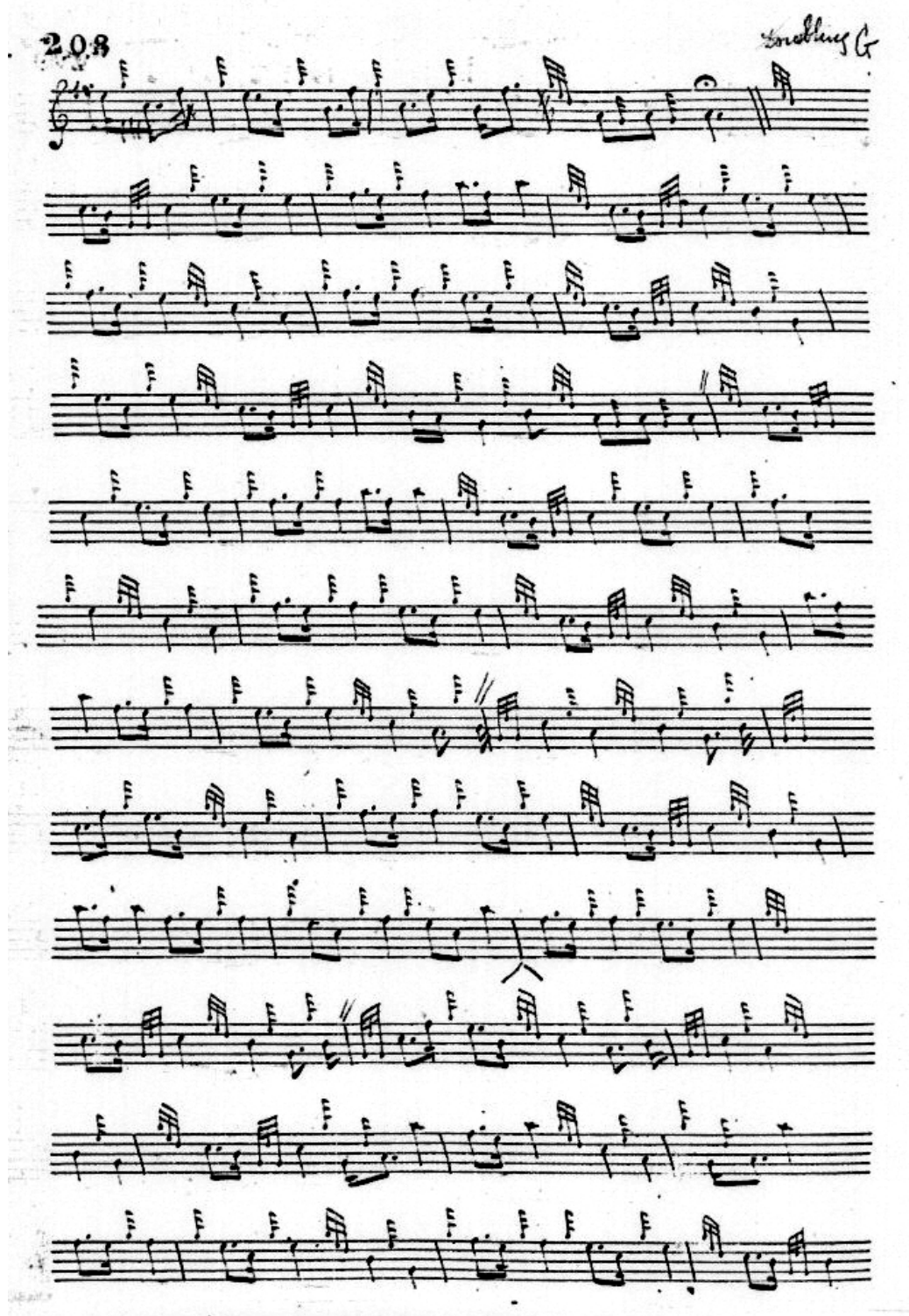
Colin Campbell develops the tune in a slightly different way to the other scores, having a siubhal singling not replicated elsewhere. The first variation in the other scores then appears as a doubling to this, and Campbell omits the second variation singling and doubling which appears in the other scores, moving straight to the taorluath and crunluath variations singling and doubling. In the Nether Lorn the tune usually called "Kinlochmoidart's Lament" is called "Cumbh craoibh na Teid" while this one, as noted above, bears the title "McLeods Lament."

Donald MacDonald treats the tune as follows:

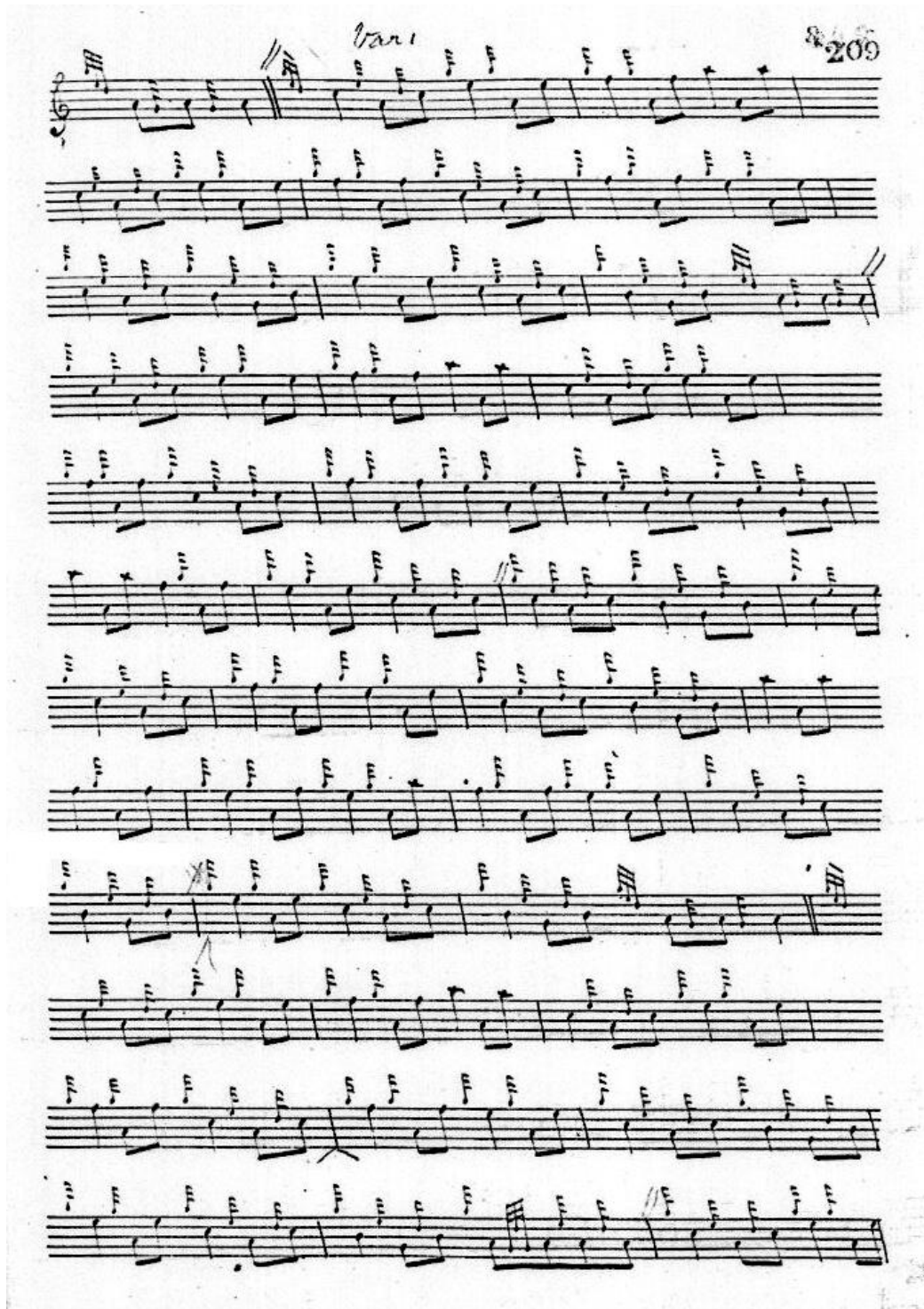
Lament for the Tree of Hundreds
LAMENT FOR THE TREE OF HUNDREDS. 287

This image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "Lament for the Tree of Hundreds". The score is written on ten staves, each containing a single melodic line. The notation is characteristic of traditional Scottish bagpipe music, featuring a variety of note values including minims, crotchets, and quavers, as well as rests. The manuscript is written in dark ink on aged, slightly yellowed paper. The title is written in a mix of capital and lowercase letters, with the number "287" in the top right corner. The overall style is that of a personal or working manuscript rather than a formal printed score.

pipes | drums



pipes | drums



210

A handwritten musical score for a pibroch, titled "210". The score is written on ten staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 2/1 time signature. The notation is dense, featuring many beamed eighth and sixteenth notes, characteristic of pibroch music. The score includes various musical symbols such as slurs, ties, and repeat signs. The handwriting is in black ink on aged, slightly yellowed paper.

211

The image displays a page of musical notation for the piece "Lost Pibroch". The notation is written on ten staves, each containing a single melodic line. The music is characterized by frequent beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes, creating a rapid, intricate melody. The notation includes various musical symbols such as stems, beams, and note heads. The page number "211" is located in the upper right corner. The overall style is that of a traditional manuscript or a printed score for a specific instrument.

pipes | drums

212



pipes | drums



pipes | drums





The reader will note the little run downs from B to low G, *hioenem*, in the ground;. There are numerous other little idiomatic touches likely to interest the thoughtful player.

Donald MacDonald jnr.'s setting departs interestingly from his father's in timing the ground in an implied 6/8. This is a pleasing way to handle a ground that can sound laborious if played too squarely in 4/4 time. The transcript of the original MS shows the tune developed only as far as the *siubhal* and only very lightly graced:

pipes | drums

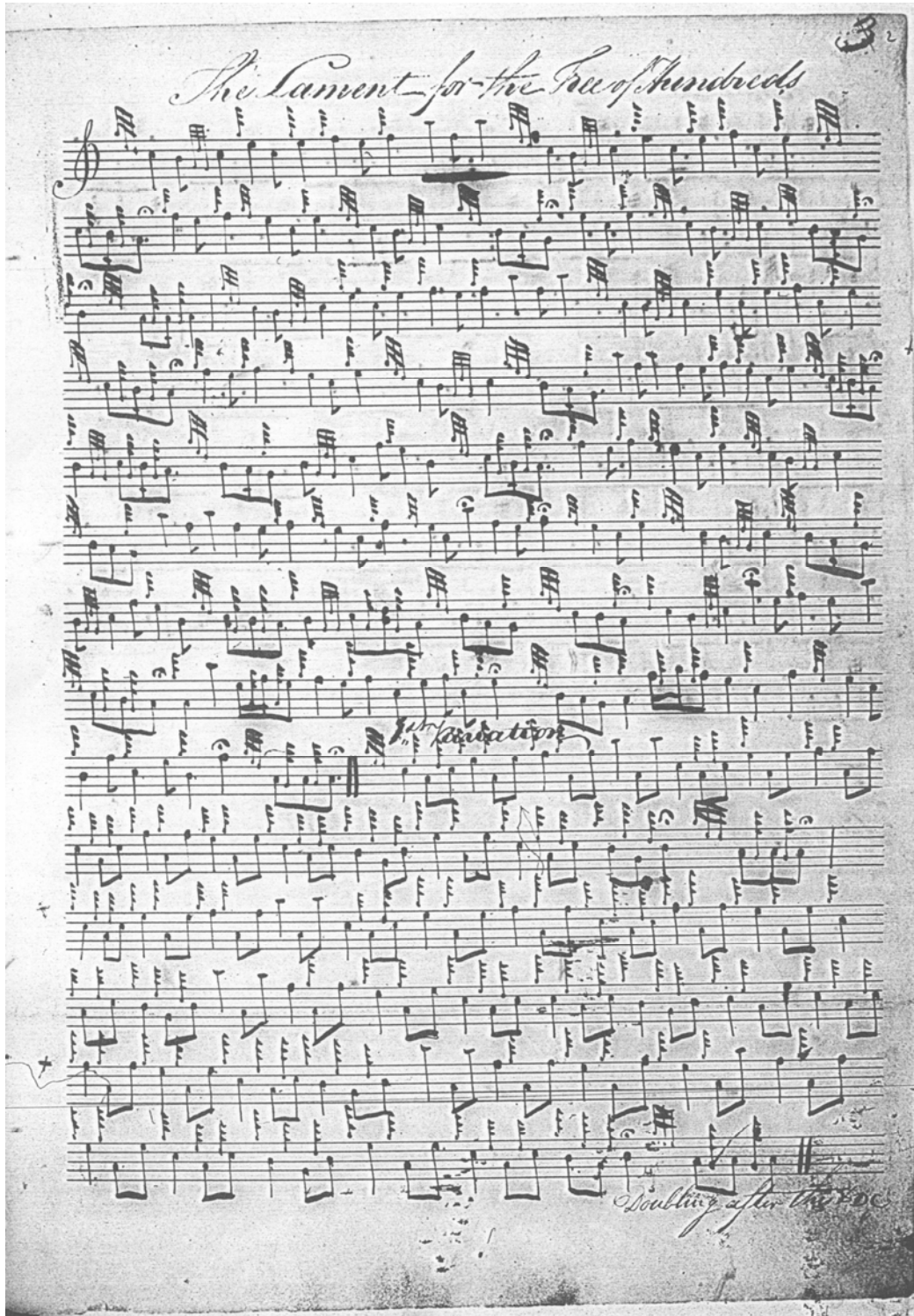
D. Macdonald's Ms.
F. 36 L. 1 *bumadh bhrach na'n' bheud*

and so on.

Peter Reid, although his overall style is very similar to Donald MacDonald snr.'s, has a number of different stylistic nuances. He does not double the ground as MacDonald does, and his score is notated only as far as the taorluath breabach singling, ending "Then follows the

pipes | drums

doubling of the above & a Cruinluidh Breabich & D C." The following gives an idea of his approach:



and so on.

D. S. MacDonald's score adds little to the expressive possibilities of the tune and is not reproduced here.

The published settings of "The Lament for the Harp Tree" show great stability in organisation, timing and ornamentation. Angus MacKay, David Glen, C. S. Thomason, William Stewart and G. F. Ross all take similar routes through this tune. **David Glen**'s approach may stand as typical:

THE LAMENT FOR THE HARP TREE.

CUMHA GRAOBH NAN TEUD.

Urlar. Andante grazioso.

60.

Doubling of Urlar.

Var. 1st In the style of a march.

Doubling of Var. 1st

Var. 2nd (Taor-luath.)

pipes | drums

142

2nd

Doubling of Taor-luath.

1st 2nd

Crùn-luath.

Repeat the Urlar.

1st 2nd

Crùn-luath Dùbailt.

1st 2nd

Repeat the Urlar.

Commentary:

Little is known with any certainty about this tune.

The earliest written commentary upon it occurs in the printed notes compiled by an unknown hand for Donald MacDonald snr.'s unpublished second volume as follows:

Cumhadh Chraobh na'n Cheud, OR A LAMENT FOR THE TREE OF HUNDREDS.

This long and grand piece is thought to be the oldest of all the Piobaireachd in the possession of any person, at the present time. A tradition concerning it runs thus: When the Fingallians lived in the Highlands of Scotland, there was an oak near their house, in the Isle of Skye, under which they feasted; and, after having enjoyed the visit of the shell once or twice, they danced to the harp. Each man's dog was bound by his owner, and Fingall's dog, whose name was Bran, was tied to a long narrow stone, which was stick into the ground, at a little distance from the tree. The Fingallians had a tree and a stone of this kind in many parts of the Highlands. They had also, in all these places, what is called, in Gaelic, Sornach, Chorre, Fhinn, or the Three Stones; on which stood the cauldron for boiling their venison. They always remained in one place, till the deer of the surrounding hills were consumed, or, until they were surprised by the Danes, or other enemies. In the course of time, the Fingallians all died,— their house was burned, and nothing left that belonged to them in the country, except the old celebrated oak, the three stones, and Bran's stake, which all remained, without visits, or respect being paid to them. A considerable time after, when sheep were brought, in place of deer, two thieves stole some sheep; and having killed them, they hung them up, on the branches of this noble oak. An old huntsman happening to pass this way, and perceiving the remains of the sheep, and their entrails, hanging upon the branches of the tree, (where he used to witness, when a boy,) the most sumptuous feasts, accompanied with music and dancing, he was very sorrowful, and wept much, on his way from the place. It appears, that, previous to that period, he, and some others, were in possession of something similar to the bagpipe chanter, on which they used to play; and he began (being much affected,) to compose the above melancholy air. There is no mention made, of the bagpipe as being a national instrument, in Great Britain, previous to that period. Ossian does not make mention of it in any of his poems; neither did any other writer for a long time after him. The term Pipe, was used prior to the Egyptians. (Donald MacDonald MS, "A Select Collection of the Ancient Music of Caledonia, called Piobaireachd," f.5 (NLS, MS 1680).

"The Lament for the Tree of Hundreds" is also the title for this tune in Peter Reid's MS of 1826 (NLS Acc 22118, ff.3-4).

It is in the earliest published source for this tune, Angus MacKay and James Logan's *Ancient Piobaireachd*, that the title "*Cumha Chraobh na'n Teud*. The Lament for the Harp Tree" first appears. Logan's note to the tune says:

This piobaireachd, so unlike all others, is evidently from its style, of very high antiquity. We have not been able to procure any satisfactory account of *Cumhadh Craobh nan teud*, which is usually translated, "Lament for the Harp Tree," i.e. the tree of strings. It strikes us that this is a bardic expression for the instrument itself, as we should say "the Bag of Pipes." There appears, however, some superstitious opinions connected with it. In the North it is called Bean Sith (Literally the woman of peace, "the good folk." Bean, a woman. Bein, a hill), either from being "the fairy tune," or so named from a noted hill in Sutherland, distinguished as the fairy mountain. The notion that it is a lamentation for the destruction of a tree on which the bards were wont to hang their harps, is too like the practice of the Jews, who, as related in Scripture, when in captivity, hung "their harps on willow trees," to permit of its being received as the just explanation of so singular an appellation." ("Historical and Traditional Notes on the Piobaireachds," p.10).

In his "Historic, Biographic and Legendary Notes to the Tunes" in David Glen's *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, "Fionn" notes

The name indicates that this tune is reminiscent of the time when the Harp or Clarsach was the popular musical instrument in the Scottish Highlands. There is a tradition in Skye that the famous pipers of the island were in the habit of meeting and having musical competitions at a place called "*Rudha Craobh nan teud*," the headland of the harp tree, or tree of chords. p.15

Presumably the different titles relate to the similarity in sound between "*ceud*," meaning a hundred; and "*teud*" which, according to Dwelly can mean the string of a musical instrument, music in general, the harp, or, indeed, any musical instrument. Linguists dispute, however, that "*crann nan teud*" actually does mean a harp (Prof. Colm O'Boyle to the writer, private correspondence, October 2004) William Matheson, editor of *The Blind Harper (An Clarsair Dall) The Songs of Roderick Morison and his Music* (Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, Edinburgh, 1970) thought that the "Harp Tree" tune was the one intended by Rory Dall for his satirical song "*Feill nan Crann*" in which he laments the decline of his sexual potency (here symbolised by the harp key) and sets sail amidst much ribald mirth and humour to the Uists to find a new one in a birlinn crewed by the lustiest dames in Dunvegan. Matheson surmises that at some stage the word "*chraobh*" must have been substituted for "*crann*" giving "*chraobh nan teud*" rather than "*crann nan teud*" hence leading to the substitution of Harp Tree for Harp Key, and such formations as "The Tree of Strings" which he considers fanciful. (pp.12-19; 154-7). The following lines give a flavour of the song:

*Chan fhasa leam na 'm bàs
a bhith fo thàir nam ban;
chan fhaod mi dhol 'nan dàil
on dh'fhàilnich air mo ghean;
's their iad, "Ciod am feum
a dh'fheudas a bhith ann?
Chaidh ionnstramaid o ghleus
on chaill e fhéin a chrann."*

(trs: I find it no easier than death to suffer the scorn of women; I may not go near them since my ability to please has failed me. "Of what use can he be?" is what they say. "His instrument has gone out of tune since he lost his harp-key.")

* * *

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