



Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon

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

- **Donald MacDonald's** *Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia* (?1818/19, and later edns.), pp.84-88;
- **Angus MacKay's** *Ancient Piobaireachd* (1838, and later edns.), pp. 82-83;
- **Donald MacPhee's** *Collection of Piobaireachd* (1879 and later edns.), pp.8-9;
- **David Glen's** *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd* (1880), pp. 28-30;
- **C. S. Thomason's** *Ceol Mor* (1900), pp.37-8;
- **William Stewart**, ed., *Piobaireachd Society Collection* (first series, 1905) i, 8-9;
- **G. F. Ross's**, *Collection of MacCrimmon and other Piobaireachd* (1929), pp. 48-9;

and in the following manuscript sources:

- **Colin Mór Campbell's** "Nether Lorn" canntaireachd, ii, 120-22 (with the title "Couloddins Lament");
- **Robert Meldrum's** MS, ff.142-145.

In the "Nether Lorne" **Colin Campbell** develops the tune in the same way as Angus MacKay, quoted below. Like MacKay, he does not specify a crunluath a mach.

Donald MacDonald's score has a number of interesting points including his usual emphasis on the initial note of his echo beats rather than the second one as in MacKay, and his memorable first variation. The ground is repeated at the end of the doubling of the first variation and again at the end of the taorluath and crunluath doublings; there is no a mach. MacDonald's title is "Cumh Pharic More Mhic Cruimmen Lament on the Death of Patrick More McCruimmen," and he gives no story to this tune in his unpublished notes:

CUNN HARRIC MORE MHRIC CRUIMMEN
Lament
ON THE
Death
— of —

PATRICK MORE M^c CRUIMMEN.

S O W

Doubling of 1st Part.

VAR: 1.

Doubling VAR: 1.

VAR: 2.

Doubling VAR: 2.

D.C.

VAR: 3.

Doubling VAR: 3.

Creannluith or Round Movement.

D.C.

88

Doubling of Creanluidh.

D.C.



Angus MacKay does not have MacDonald's First Variation, and there are also a number of typographical errors (F is substituted for high G at a number of points). This version is shorter than MacDonald's, therefore, although MacKay does indicate that the ground be restated at the end of the taorluath and crunluath doublings. MacKay does not specify a crunluath a mach either. In the *Piobaireachd Society Collection* (second series, vol.3, p.84), Archibald Campbell claimed that his score was Angus MacKay's, with the typographical errors corrected by Sandy Cameron. But a lot more was changed than simply correcting the typos: including extensive silent replacement of MacKay's dotted-quaver/semi quaver pattern in the ground with strings of crotchets. MacKay sets the tune like this:

CUMHA PHADRUIG OIC MHIIC CRUIMEIN.
Patrick óg Mac Crummen's Lament.

Composed by

John Dall Mackay

Piper to Gairloch.

XXXV.

Doubling of Part 1.

Variation 1.

Doubling of Variation 1.

Variation 2.

1st

2nd

Doubling of Variation 2.

1st

2nd

Crun-luath.

1st

2nd

Doubling of Crun-luath.

1st

2nd

D. C.

D. C. Thema.

Donald MacPhee times his *eallachs* "down"; and does not direct the ground to be repeated within the tune; otherwise he follows MacKay. He, too, has no crunluath a mach.



David Glen's score gives a fine example of his characteristic use of the slur to indicate smooth transition between notes. He plays his *eallach* "down," and also gives Donald MacDonald's 'First Variation', although he cadences it slightly differently from MacDonald and reverses the pointing. Glen has no crunluath a mach either:

PATRICK ÒG MAC CRIMMON'S LAMENT.

CUMHA PHÀDRUIG ÒIG MHIIC CRUIMEIN.

Composed by
John Dall Mackay.

Ùrlar.

12.

Dùblachadh an Ùrlair.

Var. 1st

Written. Played.

and so on.

C. S. Thomason gives Donald MacDonald, Angus MacKay, David Glen, Donald MacKay, and Keith Cameron as his sources, and indicates that this was one of the tunes which his main teacher, Donald MacKay, was taught by Donald Cameron. Interestingly, he gives MacDonald's First Variation *after* the MacKay style one, and this is perhaps how some of the Camerons did it. Thomason repeats the ground after the taorluath and crunluath doublings and he, too, has no a mach:

LAMENT FOR PATRICK OG MAC-ORUIMEIN

1. 9.12 G.

2 G.

3 vi

4 vi

5 vii

6 vii

7 T. 10C.

8 T. 11C.

William Stewart's score follows that of Angus MacKay, as does **G. F. Ross's**.



Commentary:

The fullest account of this famous piece is given in a column "Fionn" (Henry Whyte, 1852-1913) contributed to the *Oban Times*, to mark the first volume of the Piobaireachd Society's first series (which contained this tune), "The Scottish Piobaireachd Society. Test Tunes. Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon. Cumha Padruig Oig Mhic Cruimein—Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon.

This popular lament was composed by John MacKay, better known as 'Am Piobaire Dall', or the blind piper, who was also a Gaelic bard of some note. He was born at Gairloch, Ross-shire, in 1666, and lived for the long period of 98 years. He acquired the elements of music from his father, 'Ruairidh Dall,' or blind Rory, who was a native of the Reay country, and died in 1689. His son was sent to Borreraig, Skye, to be educated at the MacCrimmon College there. He was not long there when he easily outstripped all the other students attending the college. His superiority aroused a good deal of jealousy among his fellow-students, and it is related that on one occasion they sought to get rid of him by throwing him over a rock. Fortunately he alighted on his feet, and suffered no material injury. The place is still known as 'Leum an doill'—the blind man's leap. Leaving the college at Borreraig he succeeded his father at Gairloch. During his stay with the laird of Gairloch he composed no fewer than twenty-four pibrochs, besides numerous strathspeys, reels, and jigs, the most celebrated of which are 'Cailleach a' Mhuillear,' 'Cailleach Liath Rarsaidh.' He frequently paid a visit to the Reay country. On one of these visits he heard of the demise of his patron and clansman, and composed the beautiful lament, 'Cumha Choire-an-easain,' which he adopted to a salute composed by his father Roderick Dall. The words of 'Coire-an-easain' will be found in MacKenzie's 'Beauties of Gaelic Poetry,' p.98. Having heard that his preceptor was dead, John Dall composed a lament for Patrick Og Mac Crimmon [...] Some time afterwards he discovered that the report was unfounded, and decided to visit Borreraig. Among the tunes he played during his stay at Borreraig was the recently-composed lament. MacCrimmon enquired where he had learned it, and after some hesitation John Dall admitted that he had composed it for Patrick Og. 'Indeed,' said MacCrimmon, 'Cumha Phadruig Oig 's e fhéin beò fhathast' (a Lament for Patrick Og and he still alive), adding 'I must learn to play my own lament.' John Dall died in 1764 and was buried in the same grave with his father, 'Ruairidh Dall', in the clachan of his native parish, Gairloch. He was succeeded by his son, Angus, who in time was succeeded by his son, John.

The four members of the family were pipers in succession to eight chiefs of Gairloch—the succession being in each case from father to son. John MacKay went to America in 1802, and died in Pictou in 1835, when over eighty years of age. It is interesting to know that a great-grandson of the 'Piobaire Dall' was stipendiary magistrate in Nova Scotia, and died in 1884, in the 91st year of his age. He had a family of four sons and six daughters, several of whom survive. Murdoch Fraser, a nephew of the stipendiary magistrate, has the chanter which belonged to the pipes on which John Dall used to play.



John Dall was acknowledged to be equal to the best of the MacCrimmons, and his abilities gave rise to the proverb—'An gille toirt bàrr air MacCriumein' (the lad outstripping MacCrimmon) [...]" (08/04/1905, p.3)

John MacDonald of Inverness was regarded as the greatest exponent of this tune during the early 20th century. John McCallum of Taynult wrote recalling him playing it at Oban before the Great War: "I can well recollect how every one present who had some knowledge of the music was electrified before he had played many bars. The late Mr Fraser of Lochawe Hotel and Carraig Thura was beside me at the time, and was greatly uplifted..." (*Oban Times*, 28/07/1923, p.3)

And this, also, was the tune Bob Brown played leading the cortege away from 3 Perceval Road, Inverness, at John MacDonald's funeral on 8 June 1953.

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