

## The Groat

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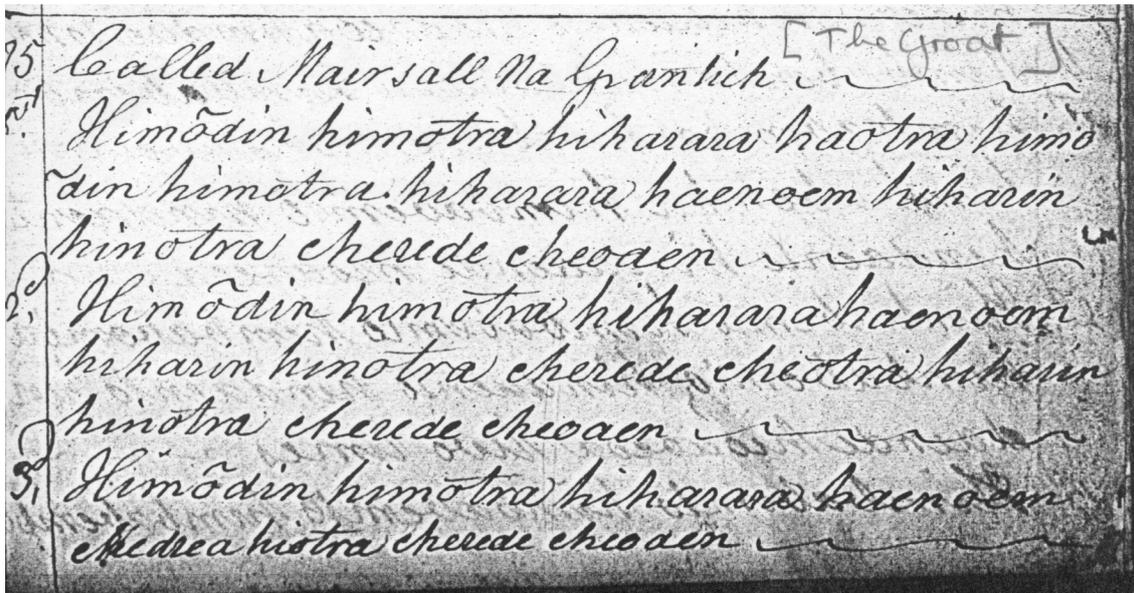
There are settings of this tune in the following manuscript sources:

- **Colin Mór Campbell's** Nether Lorn Canntaireachd, ii, 164-6 (with the title "Mairsall na Grantich");
- **Angus MacKay's** MS, i, 153-155; and in the so-called "Kintarbert MS" folios (with the title "*An Gròt. Misgeach* The Drunken Groat");
- **Colin Cameron's** MS, ff.3-4 (setting is in his father's hand and signed "Donald Cameron");
- **Uilleam Ross's** MS, f.235;
- **D. S. MacDonald's** MS, ii, 12-14;
- **John MacDougal Gillies's** MS, ff.18-19;
- **Robert Meldrum's** MS, ff.106-108;

and in the following published sources:

- **Donald MacDonald's** *Ancient Martial Music*, pp.80-83;
- **C. S. Thomason's** *Ceol Mor*, pp.33-4;
- **David Glen**, *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.109-10;
- **G. F. Ross**, *MacCrimmon and Other Piobaireachd*, pp.12-13.

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



pipes | drums

165

*First Motion*

1<sup>st</sup> Himto himto haho hiotra himto himto haen  
 hioem hintro hintro cheohaen

2<sup>o</sup> Himto himto haen hioem hintro hintro chea  
 hiotra hintro hintro cheohaen

3<sup>o</sup> Himto himto haen hioem chea hiotra hintro  
 haen

4<sup>th</sup> Himto himto himda himda himto himto him  
 da himto hintro hintro hinda hioa

1<sup>st</sup> Himto himto himda himto himto himto  
 hinda hioa two times

3<sup>o</sup> Himto himto himda himto hinda hia himto  
 himda

*Ta Olive Gear*

1<sup>st</sup> Himbabemto himbabemto himbabemba  
 himbabemba himbabemto himbabemto him  
 babemto himbabemba hindaento hindaento  
 hindaento hindaento <sup>hioem</sup> hindaento hindaento

2<sup>o</sup> Himbabemto himbabemto himbabemba  
 himbabemto hindaento hindaento hin  
 daento hindaento hindaento hindaento <sup>hioem</sup> hindaento hindaento

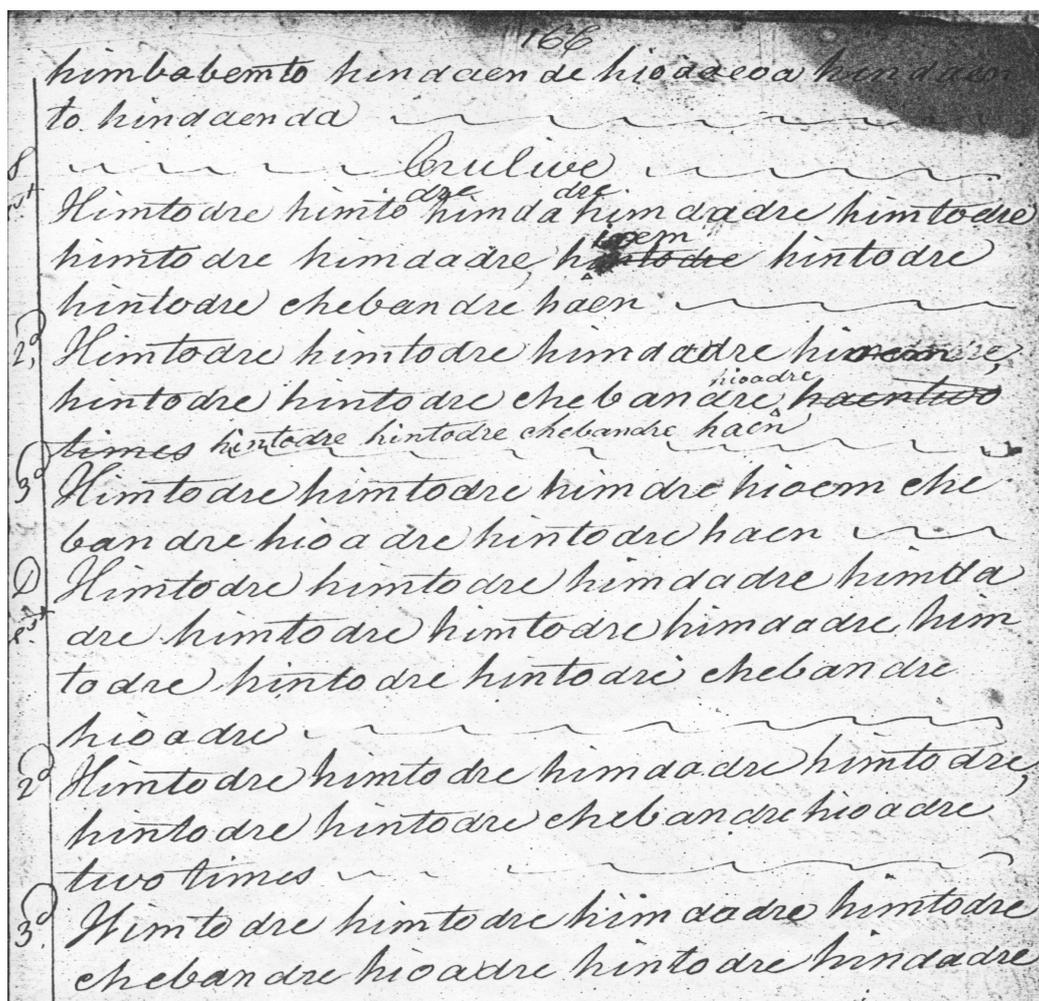
3<sup>o</sup> Himbabemto himbabemto himbabemba  
 hioem hindaento hioaento hindaento haen

4<sup>th</sup> Himbabemto himbabemto himbabemba  
 himbabemba himbabemto himbabemto  
 himbabemba himbabemto hindaento  
 hindaento hindaento hioaento

1<sup>st</sup> Himbabemto himbabemto himbabemba  
 himbabemto hindaento hindaento hin  
 daento hioaento two times

3<sup>o</sup> Himbabemto himbabemto himbabemba

## pipes | drums



**Colin Mór** sets the tune pretty much along the lines of the other traditional accounts, with a ground, siubhal singling and doubling, taorluath foscailte singling and doubling, and crunluath foscailte singling and doubling. There is no indication that the ground should be repeated either between the variations or at the end of the tune. The Ground itself goes somewhat as follows:

# pipes | drums

Called Mairsall Na Grantich



The score seems to cry out for cadencing at various points, and of course this is what tradition allows – the placing of such things was very much at the disposal of the performer.

**Donald MacDonald** sets the tune like this:

*An Groatha!*  
THE GROAT  
COMPOSED BY M<sup>r</sup>. CRUIMEN PIPER TO  
M<sup>r</sup>. Leod of Dundegan  
on the Christning of  
RORY MORE THE CHIEF'S SON

A historical account of this Pibroch is given in Vol. 24  
Walker & Anderson Engravers Edin<sup>g</sup>

And so on. We will return to this score once we have considered Angus MacKay's below.

Angus MacKay sets the tune like this:

**pipes | drums**

An Grot. Misgeach  
The Drunken Goat \* some 153

67

*Doubbling*

*Var. 1*

*Fin.*

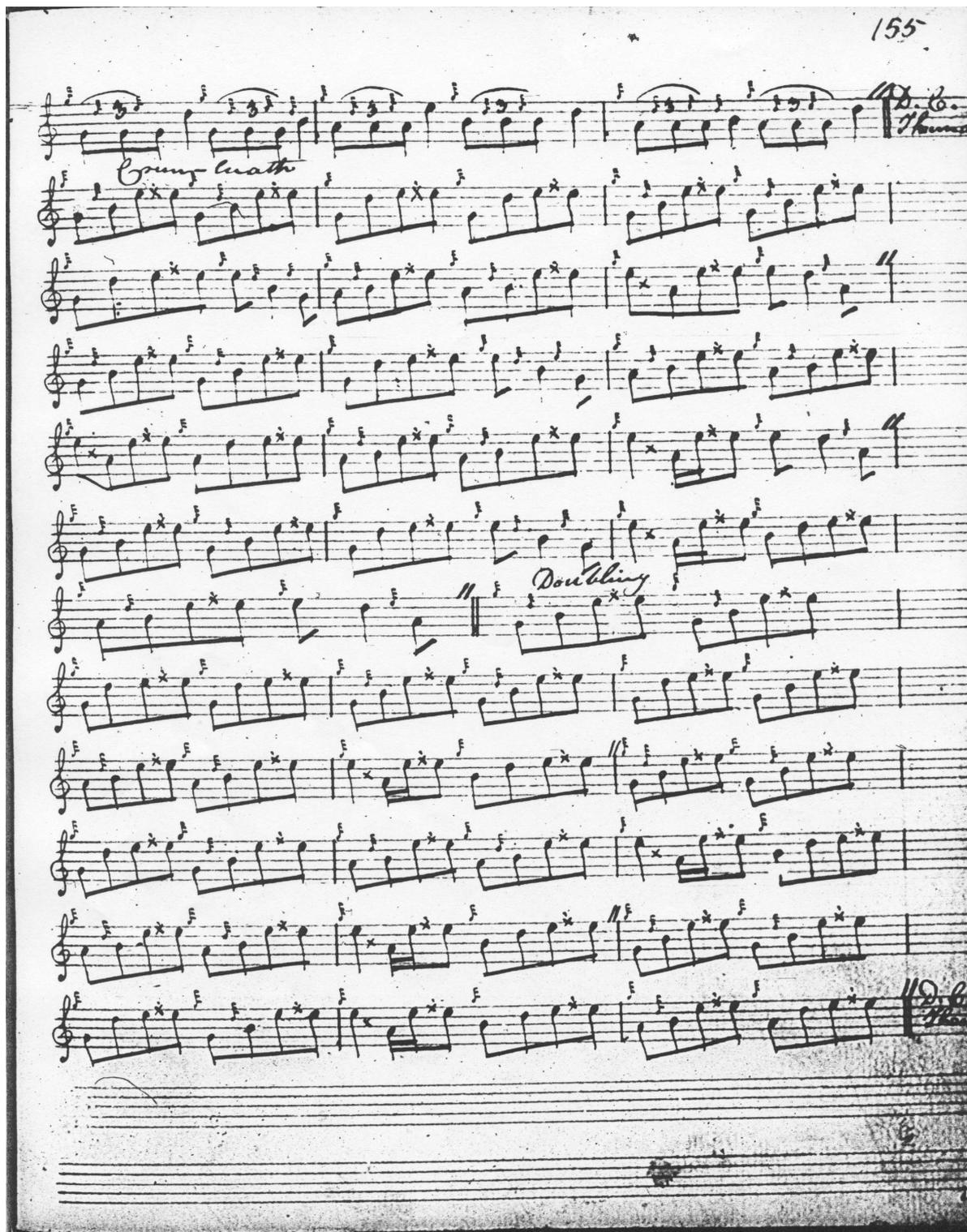
pipes | drums

154

Var. 2<sup>nd</sup>

Doubbling

# pipes | drums



The close similarity to Colin Mór's style of the tune is apparent at once; although we see at a glance one major difference in approach between Colin Mór's Nether Lorn Canntaireachd and

## pipes | drums

the later manuscript and published sources, namely that in the former what are nowadays called "cadence notes" are nearly always implied, whereas MacKay and Donald MacDonald they are indicated in the score, with varying degrees of explicitness with regard to duration. The title appears originally to have been simply "*An Gròt.*" The adjective "*Misgeach*" (Drunken) appears to have been inserted subsequently, giving the present English title. The version in the so-called "Kintarbert MS" does not differ significantly from that in MacKay's original MS and is not reproduced here. It may be useful, however, to pause and consider the obvious differences between the style of setting in MacKay and MacDonald. For example, MacKay gives a specific relative duration for his E cadence notes, while MacDonald treats these groups as semi-demi-quaver appoggiaturas following conventions widely used during the first half of the nineteenth century. This left their timing to the discretion of the player. Clearly the context requires them to have *some* time value. But how much? The situation is somewhat clarified when we turn to the near-contemporary Miller MS, "A Collection of National Music for the Great Highland Bagpipe. Volume compiled by Robert Millar and others for John C. Cameron, bagpipe maker, Dundee, 1838" (National Library of Scotland, Acc.11516/2, McLennan Papers). Millar was clearly familiar with Donald MacDonald's notational conventions, and his manuscript shows the three note G E D appoggiatura movement



routinely used as an introductory anacrusis in light music strathspeys and reels, in contexts where it can only indicate an introductory E quaver. This does not completely settle this somewhat thorny matter, but it does shed some valuable additional light upon it.

The setting in **Colin Cameron's** book is in the hand of the compiler's father, Donald Cameron, and proceeds as follows:

*An Gratha Shu Great*

A handwritten musical score for the tune 'An Gratha Shu Great'. The score is written on 12 staves, each with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The notation is dense, featuring a variety of note values including eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes, as well as rests and accidentals. The music is arranged in a single system, with each staff containing a line of the melody. The handwriting is clear and legible, typical of a professional or skilled amateur composer's manuscript.

# pipes | drums

And so on.

Most of the remaining manuscript or published sources do not depart from this basic pattern, and so are not reproduced here.

**C. S. Thomason** sets the tune as follows:

Musical score for "THE GROAT" (1696). The score is written for five staves, with a vertical staff on the right. The title "THE GROAT" and the year "1696" are printed above the first staff. The score consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system is followed by a second system, and then two systems of sixteenth-note patterns. The score is labeled with "2D" and "3D" above the first and second systems of the sixteenth-note patterns, respectively. The vertical staff on the right contains a key signature and a time signature.

Later he re-set it like this:

Musical score for "THE GROAT" (1696). The score is written for five staves, with a vertical staff on the right. The title "THE GROAT" and the year "1696" are printed above the first staff. The score consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system is followed by a second system, and then two systems of sixteenth-note patterns. The score is labeled with "2D" and "3D" above the first and second systems of the sixteenth-note patterns, respectively. The vertical staff on the right contains a key signature and a time signature.

Thomason gives as his sources Donald MacDonald's published volume, and John MacDougall Gillies, and gives two versions of the tune as we can see. The first is based on Donald MacDonald's published score, and in it Thomason regularises MacDonald treatment

of the cadences in the ground, eliminating all but the initial cadence. Thereafter his text follows MacDonald with the exception that he eliminates the second of the internal cadences in the Siubhal doubling, and the initial cadences of the taorluath singling and doubling. Thomason's second version substitutes the ground and siubhal singling and doubling of MacDonald for that of Angus Mackay. He had long been in possession of a copy of MacDonald's manuscript; he gained access to MacKay's rather later. As the connection with Gillies shows, Thomason had fruitful contact with a number of late Victorian master pipers whose approach is reflected in his published collection.

## *Commentary*

The main stylistic problem with this fine old tune lies in clutter at the transition from the "B" to "A" phrases at the ends of lines in those settings which include a redundant-sounding cadence E at this point which rather interrupts the flow of the tune. Donald MacDonald's score avoids this, although it has other issues including what appears to be an extraneous bar in the Ground – the second of the repeat of the B phrase, line two. To a modern ear, however, the chief difference between MacDonald and MacKay lies in the crunluath fogsailte, expressed "opened" (as the nomenclature implies it should be) in MacDonald and "closed" in MacKay. This difference in approach ultimately underlies the decision of the Piobaireachd Society in its second series to arrange fogsailte tunes with a MacKay style movement in the singling and a MacDonald-style one in the doubling ostensibly at the suggestion of Sandy Cameron the younger. The great John MacDonald of Inverness who had studied with the Camerons, instructed his pupils Bob Brown and Bob Nicol not to adopt this style because it was "wrong," although he conceded that it was "pretty." The Bobs played their fogsailte crunluath movements, singling and doubling, in the "closed" MacKay style.

The title of this tune is somewhat mysterious, but a note in C. S. Thomason's "Ceol Mor Legends" manuscript sheds a good deal of light on the subject:

### *An Grota – The Groat*

This tune is also designated "An Grota Misgeach" – the Drunken Groat. It is said to have been composed by the hereditary piper on the birth of Sir Roderick MacLeod – better known as "Rory Mor." As this interesting event must have taken place about the middle of the sixteenth century the probabilities are that the tune is the composition of the famous Donald Mor MacCrimmon, father of Padruig Mor, who was hereditary piper during the chiefship of Rory Mor. It is traditionally stated that money – especially silver groats – were distributed among the household on the birth of Rory Mor as well as a plentiful supply of liquor, & that the result was a jollification.

It may be stated that the groats were of various values – many of them of much greater worth than what we usually associate with the modern coin which bears that name. It was probably on the same occasion that the tune

# pipes | drums

"An ann air mhir 'tha sibh?" was composed. (C. S. Thomason's "Ceol Mor Legends" MS 2749, f.38).

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