

# The Blue Ribbon

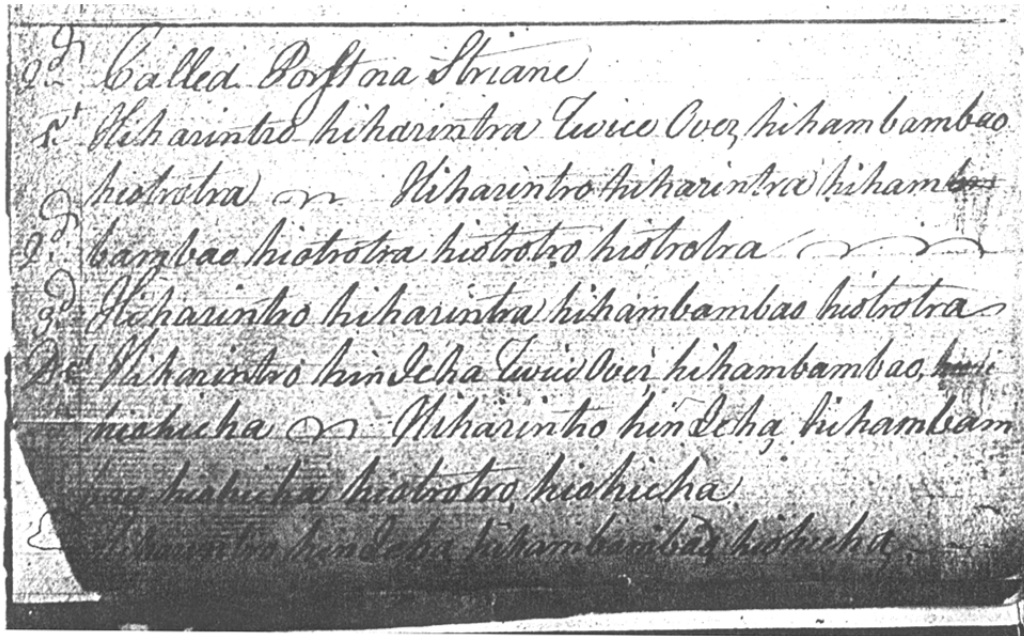
There are settings of this tune in the following manuscript sources:

- **Colin Mór Campbell**, "Nether Lorn Canntaireachd," i, 3-6;
- **Donald MacDonald's** MS, ff.262-267;
- **Angus MacKay's** MS, i, 175-7;
- **John MacKay's** MS, ff.156-8;
- **Colin Cameron's** MS, ff.48-9;
- **Uilleam Ross's** MS, ff.1-5;
- **Robert Meldrum's** MS, ff.110-114 (with the title "The Grants' Blue Ribbon" suggesting a source in Thomason);

And in the following published sources:

- **Uilleam Ross**, *Ross's Collection*, pp.4-7;
- **C. S. Thomason**, *Ceol Mor*, pp.141-2 (with the title "The Grants' Blue Ribbon");
- **David Glen**, *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.194-6;
- **G. F. Ross**, *Some Piobaireachd Studies*, p.39.

**Colin Campbell** sets the tune as follows:



174

The First Motion

Single

1<sup>st</sup> Hindichio hindichae Twice Over himelchishio diche  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Hindichio hindicha himelchishio diche hio Schioh  
 3<sup>rd</sup> diche Hindichio hindicha himelchishio diche  
 4<sup>th</sup> Hindichio hindichae Twice Over himelchishio diche  
 5<sup>th</sup> diche Hindichio hindichae himelchishio diche  
 6<sup>th</sup> himelchishio diche himelchishio diche  
 7<sup>th</sup> Hindichio hindichae himelchishio diche  
 8<sup>th</sup> himelchishio diche himelchishio diche

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Motion

1<sup>st</sup> Himen hioen himen haen Twice Over himen hioen  
 2<sup>nd</sup> hioen haen Himen hioen himen haen Himen  
 3<sup>rd</sup> hioen hioen haen hioen hioen hioen haen  
 4<sup>th</sup> Himen hioen himen haen himen hioen hioen haen  
 5<sup>th</sup> Himen hiohio himen hiohio Twice Over himen hiohio  
 6<sup>th</sup> hiohio hiohio himen hiohio himen hiohio  
 7<sup>th</sup> hiohio hiohio hiohio hiohio hiohio hiohio  
 8<sup>th</sup> Himen hiohio himen hiohio himen hiohio hiohio

Tilliv Gair

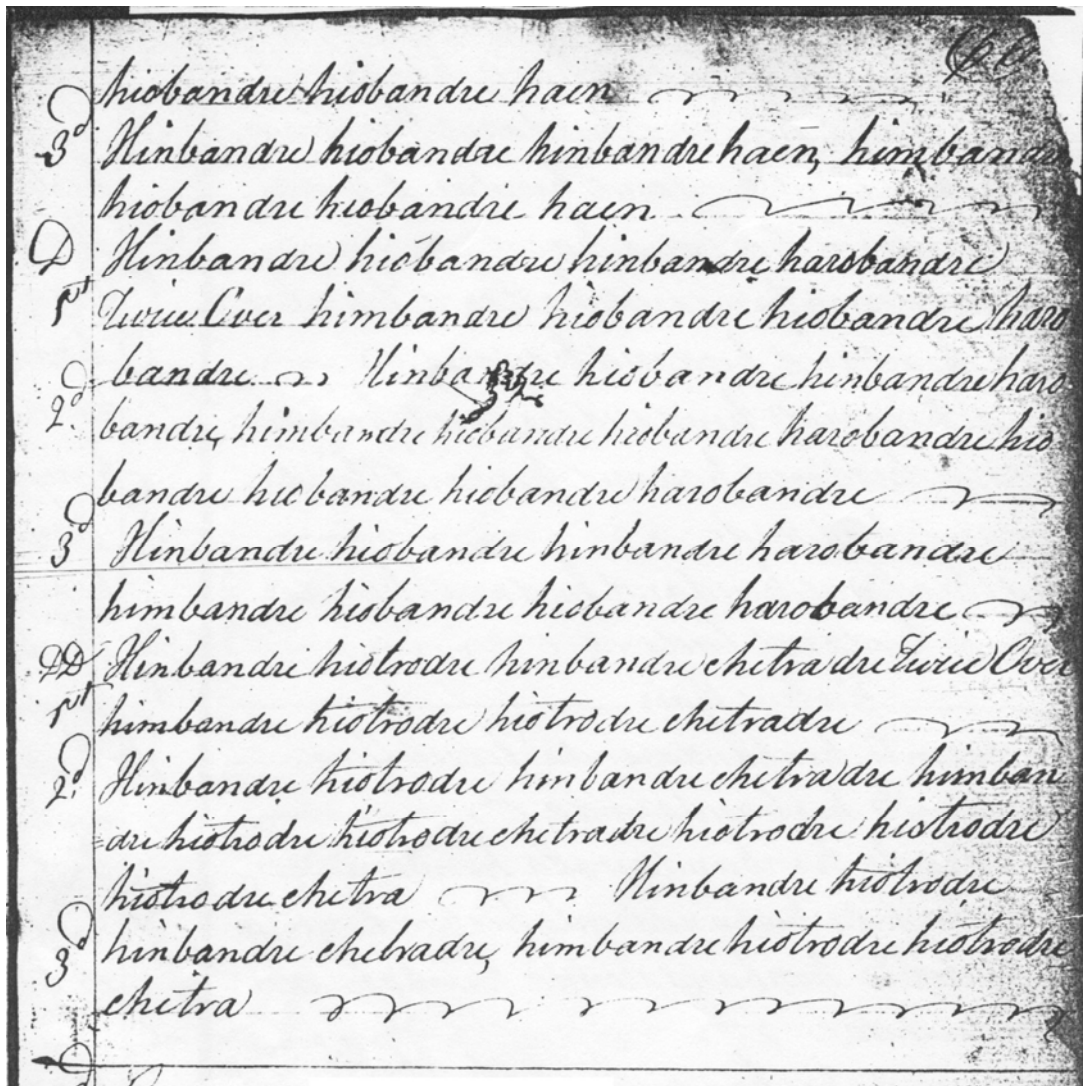
1<sup>st</sup> Hindaridto hindaridta Twice Over hindaridto his  
 2<sup>nd</sup> daridta Hindaridto hindaridta hindaridto  
 3<sup>rd</sup> hindaridta his daridto hindaridta  
 4<sup>th</sup> Hindaridto hindaridta hindaridto his daridta  
 5<sup>th</sup> Hindaridta his daridta Twice Over hindaridta  
 6<sup>th</sup> hindaridta Hindaridta hindaridta  
 7<sup>th</sup> daridta his daridta Twice Over  
 8<sup>th</sup> Hindaridta his daridta hindaridta his daridta

Tao live

1<sup>st</sup> Hindarid his darid hindarid hadarid himen  
 2<sup>nd</sup> darid his darid hindarid haen himen  
 3<sup>rd</sup> darid his darid himen







**Colin Campbell** develops the tune through a ground, and three thumb variations which build a pleasing tension between the neighboring tetratonic scales A, B, D, E and G, B, D, E, and a clever alternation between A and high G both in the top and bottom hands—particularly telling in "the ffirst Motion" where the two scales are combined. The doubling of the ffirst Motion creates problems because somebody has deleted the regular returns to the A tonic, so that as it stands it seems a mere repeat of the ffirst Motion singling. The typeset transcript below suggests a possible reading here. The setting has a "Crolive gair"—something of a moveable feast in Nether Lorn nomenclature, sometimes indicating a crunluath fogsailte movement, sometimes, as here, seeming to indicate a pendulum-style movement. In the taorluath doubling the figures return to D rather than alternating between B and D, and the crunluath a mach on D is played, Macarthur style, off E.



In the musically typeset examples I have read the syllable *ba* in *hambabembao* as an expressed D quaver; it could be a gracenote, although the balance of the tune as a whole does imply that it could be sounded.

The leading features of **Colin Campbell**'s score are as follows:

Blue Ribbon Ground--Colin Campbell



Doubling



the first Motion



Doubling of first Motion



the 2d Motion



2d Motion Doubling



Tillive Gair





Tillive Gair Doubling



Taolive



Taolive Doubling



Crolive Gair



Crolive Gair Doubling



Crolive



A crunluath duinte doubling follows along conventional lines, and the tune concludes with an interesting a mach:



**Donald MacDonald** sets the tune as follows:



262 *The blue ribbon* THE BLUE RIBBON (THE GRANTS')

A handwritten musical score for a pipe and drum tune. The page is numbered 262 in the top left corner. The title 'The blue ribbon' is written in cursive above the first staff, and 'THE BLUE RIBBON (THE GRANTS)' is printed in a serif font to the right. The music is written on 11 staves in a 2/4 time signature, indicated by a '2' over a '4'. The notation consists of rhythmic patterns using eighth and sixteenth notes, often grouped together. There are numerous repeat signs (double bar lines with dots) throughout the piece. The paper is aged and slightly discolored.



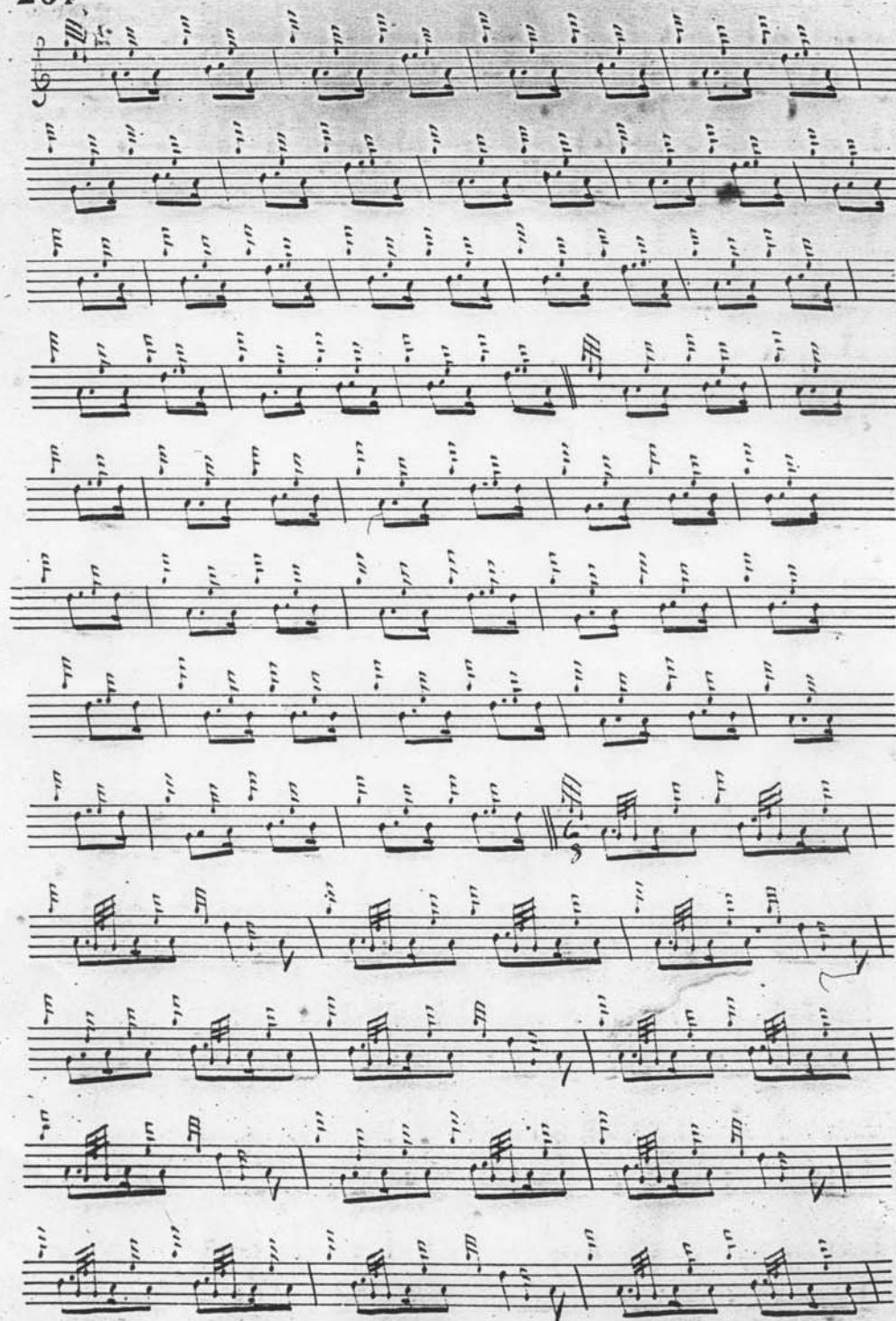








264



T

265

The image displays a page of musical notation for pipes and drums, consisting of 12 staves. The notation is written in a traditional style, featuring various rhythmic patterns, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The page number '265' is visible in the top right corner. The music is arranged in a single system, with each staff containing a line of notation. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, accidentals, and dynamic markings, typical of traditional Scottish pipe and drum music.



266

The image displays a handwritten musical score for pipes and drums, numbered 266. The score is written on 12 staves, each containing a complex, rhythmic melody. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings, typical of traditional Scottish pipe music. The paper is aged and slightly discolored.



One of the most striking features of **Donald MacDonald's** score is the ornate decoration in the thumb variation. This might perhaps be timed as follows:



MacDonald develops the tune rather fully, with singling, doubling and trebling of siubhal, taorluath and crunluath. In the taorluath we note his interesting a mach played off an expressed initial quaver on B and then cut in the MacKay style in the movement on D; whereas in the crunluath both are held but here MacDonald uses his characteristic movement on D with pleasing effect.

**Angus MacKay** sets the tune in 3/4, producing a rather "square" effect in contrast to MacDonald's more idiomatic duple time. MacKay's setting tends to be plainer in terms of ornament, and we see this particularly in the first thumb variation.

**Angus MacKay** sets the tune like this:



175

*An Rìbean Gorm!*

*The Blue Ribband* \* o o

The image shows a handwritten musical score on aged paper. The title 'An Rìbean Gorm!' is written in a cursive script at the top. Below it, the subtitle 'The Blue Ribband' is also in cursive, followed by three small circles. The score consists of seven staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is written in a cursive, handwritten style. There are several annotations in the score: 'Thumk mar. 1st' is written above the fourth staff, 'Thumk mar. 2nd' is written above the sixth staff, and 'Thumk mar. 3rd' is written above the seventh staff. The paper shows signs of age, including some staining and wear along the edges.

176

var. 3<sup>rd</sup>

Doubting.

rio

var. 4<sup>th</sup>

Doubting.

rio

var. 5<sup>th</sup>

Doubting.

rio



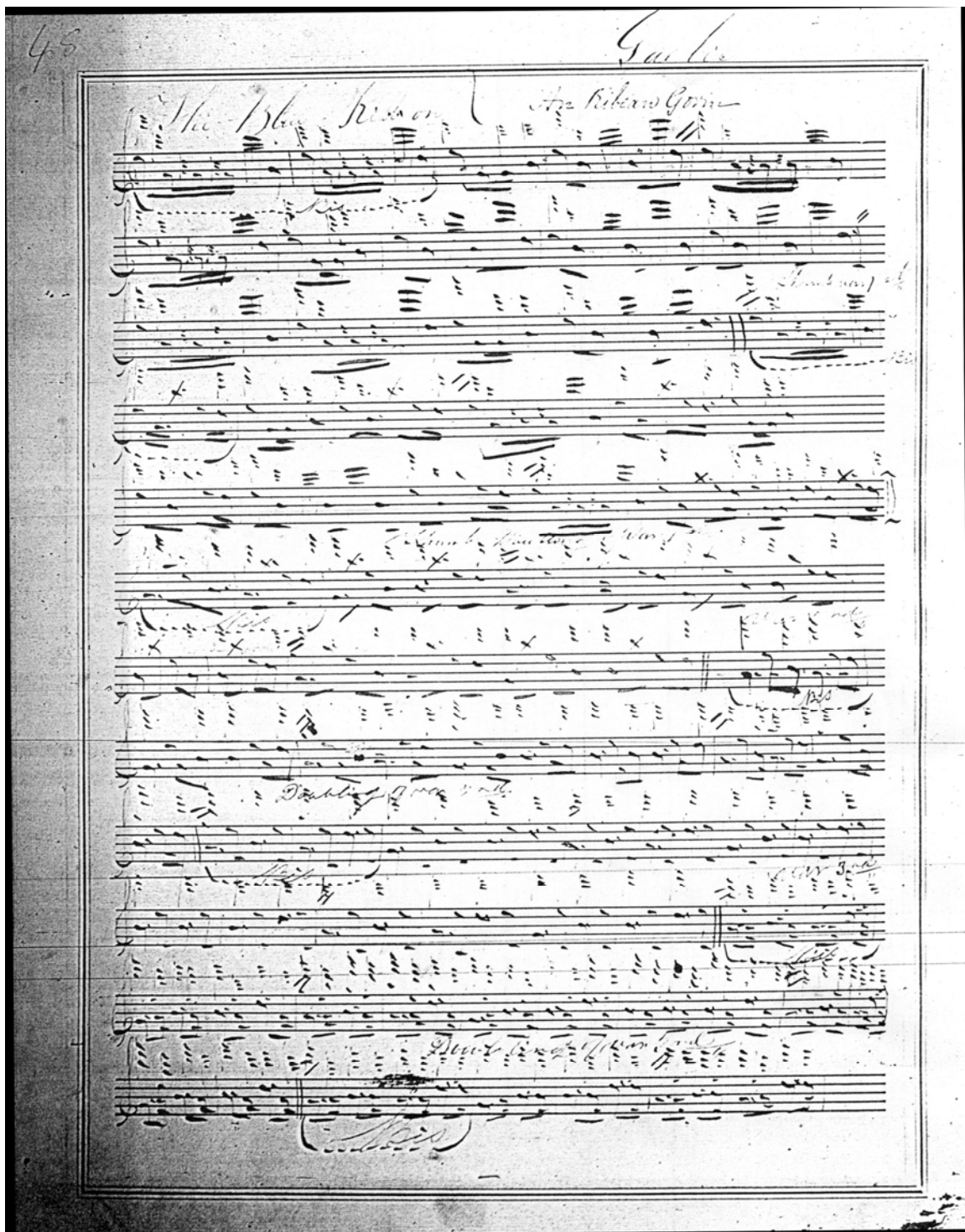


Interestingly Angus MacKay has no taorluath or crunluath a mach. He repeats the ground at the end of the taorluath and crunluath doublings.



That there was no uniform MacKay "house style" is indicated by the setting of this tune in his brother John's MS. **John MacKay** sets the tune in a rather pedestrian 4/4, lengthening the notes at the end of each bar of the ground, and he has the "Tillive Gair" variations singling and doubling unlike Angus. His score is incomplete, effectively ending with the opening gesture of the taorluath duinte variation, but the scraps which follow suggest that he played a taorluath a mach (again unlike Angus). John MacKay's score is not reproduced here.

**Colin Cameron's** setting develops the tune as Angus MacKay does, but once again, we see a different choice of time-signature for the ground, giving a more fluent through-played effect, and avoiding MacKay's tendency to split the ground into discrete melodic chunks:



And so on.

**Uilleam Ross** sets the tune like this:

4

# RIOBAN GORM.

THE BLUE RIBAND.

2. Slow.

The musical score is written in 3/4 time and begins with a 'Slow.' tempo marking. It consists of several staves of music, including a main melody and several variations. The variations are labeled 'Thumb Var.', 'Doubling Thumb Var.', '2nd Var.', and 'Doubling 2nd Var.'. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and triplets, as well as dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano). The piece concludes with a double bar line.



The musical score consists of 12 staves of music, primarily in 2/4 time. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The score is divided into sections by double bar lines and includes several annotations:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Var:** This annotation appears above the third staff, indicating a variation.
- Doubling 3<sup>rd</sup> Var:** This annotation appears above the fifth staff, indicating a doubling of the third variation.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Var:** This annotation appears above the seventh staff, indicating a fourth variation.
- Doubling 4<sup>th</sup> Var:** This annotation appears above the ninth staff, indicating a doubling of the fourth variation.

The score also includes several triplets, indicated by a '3' in a circle below the notes. The final staff ends with the notation 'K.S.', which likely stands for 'Killick's Song' or a similar reference.

6

5<sup>th</sup> Var: Taorluidh.



Doubling 5<sup>th</sup> Var:



6<sup>th</sup> Var:



Creanluidh. 7<sup>th</sup> Var:



And so on.

The interest of Ross's setting lies in his substitution of tripling for taorluath figures in the pendulum movement, and in the first crunluath variation, played in a manner similar to what we see in "The Finger Lock" and one or two other tunes (although it is rare). We may note, incidentally, his curious rendering of the throws on D at the end of lines 1-3 of the ground. In Ross MS. they are done like this:



This may perhaps be intended to show a distinctly "heavy" throw at these points, and his typesetter misread the notation. Uilleam Ross was a great-nephew of John Ban MacKenzie, and this may, perhaps, represent a family tradition. Ross's score is a further indication that if a tune was in MacKay it was by no means set in stone for all time thereafter, and later Victorian piper-editors felt quite free to take their own routes through it.

**C. S. Thomason** gives two versions, one entitled "The Blue Ribbon (The Grants)" and one "The Blue Ribbon (Isle of Mull)." The Isle of Mull tune is the piece also known to tradition as "The Tune of Strife," and Thomason includes it again under the "Strife" title later in his collection (p.275) citing Angus MacKay's MS as his source and indicating that it came down through Donald MacKay (Angus's nephew) and that the latter was taught it by Donald Cameron. For the Grants tune—the one we are considering here—he cites Donald MacDonald's MS, Uilleam Ross's published book and Donald MacKay. Thomason follows Uilleam Ross fairly closely, and his score is not reproduced here. Nor is that from **Robert Meldrum's**



MS which adds little to the expressive possibilities of the tune. **David Glen**, as he frequently does, provides a fine summary of mainstream Victorian tradition, beginning thus:

# THE BLUE RIBBON. AN RIBEAN GORM.

Urlar. *Moderately slow.*

82.

Var. 1<sup>st</sup>

Doubling of Var. 1<sup>st</sup>

Var. 2<sup>nd</sup> Distinet and pointed.

Doubling of Var. 2<sup>nd</sup>

And so on.

In his book, *Some Piobaireachd Studies*, G. F. Ross took issue with Glen's shuttling between time-signatures (which some might think one of the main rhythmical attractions of the tune) and sought to resolve the whole into duple time, as follows:



## THE BLUE RIBBON (The Grants'?)

On the left we have a case of a tune in "three" time with certain variations in "even" time. This is an opposite case, for we find the tune an "even" time one with the Ground, First Variation and its Doubling (in Glen's version) written in "three" time. The following revisions are suggested, the First line only being dealt with.

Ground - As in Glen.

Revised

It will be noted the change made is the lengthening of the last note of each bar and, in a few cases, slightly different pointing.

First Variation - As in Glen.

Revised

In the above revision, also, the lengthening of the last note of the bar is the main alteration.

Doubling - As in Glen.

Revised

This revision places the middle beat of the "three" time version as part of the left half bar.

The result sounds interestingly like John MacKay, but even so the result in playing would be exceptionally square, seriously compromising the fluency of the melody.

*Commentary:*

In his notes, Donald MacDonald says "It would be difficult to make out to whom this air belongs. The MacNiels, [sic] the Macleans, and also the Macquarries, claim it. Be it as it may, it is a bond, the signal of which, is the wearing of the Ribbon in the button-hole of the waistcoat" p.4.

Donald MacDonald calls this tune "The Blue Ribbon (The Grants)." He has another tune called "The Blue Ribbon," which is recorded elsewhere in tradition as "The Tune of Strife," and there are strong thematic links between the two. C. S. Thomason distinguished between them by calling one "The Blue Ribbon (The Grants) and the other "The Blue Ribbon (Isle of Mull). The Nether Lorn gives "Porst na Straine" as the name of the "Grants" tune, and there are linguistic links as well. In his dictionary Dwelly records "*stri*" as strife, and "*striall/striam/strian*" as a strip of cloth. So that a possible translation might be "The Ribbon Tune." In volume ii of the Nether Lorn is a tune called "Ribban Goarm," which is "The Tune of Strife," beginning *Chenodin tra ffour times chenodintro hintrotra hiotrarodin himbantro*.

\* \* \*

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