

Lady MacDonald's Lament

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

– **John MacGregor and Angus MacArthur**, "Highland Society of London's MS," ff.73-8;

and in the following published sources:

– **Frans Buisman and Andrew Wright**, eds., *The MacArthur-MacGregor Manuscript of Piobaireachd* (1820), p.152;

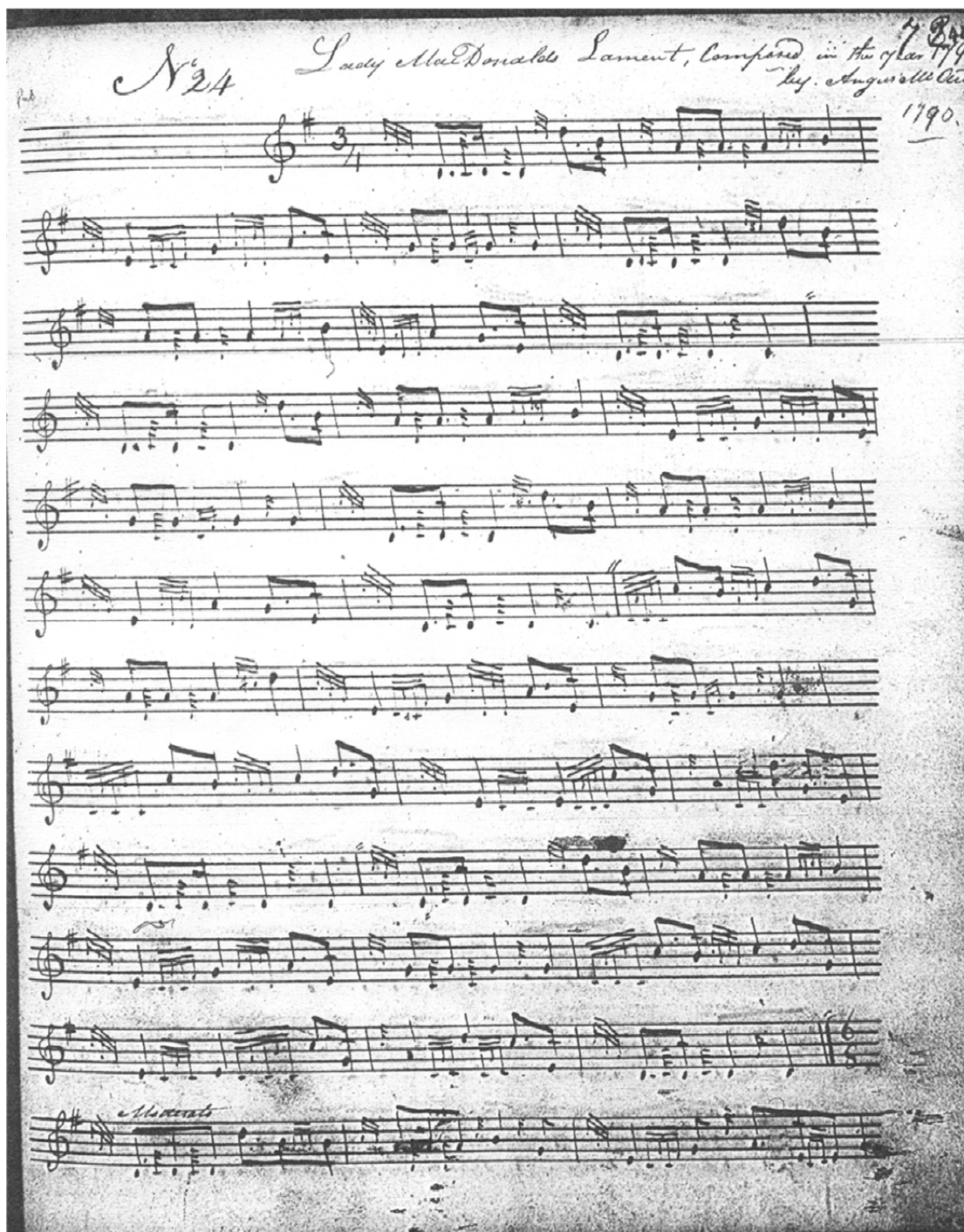
– **Angus MacKay**, *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.137-140;

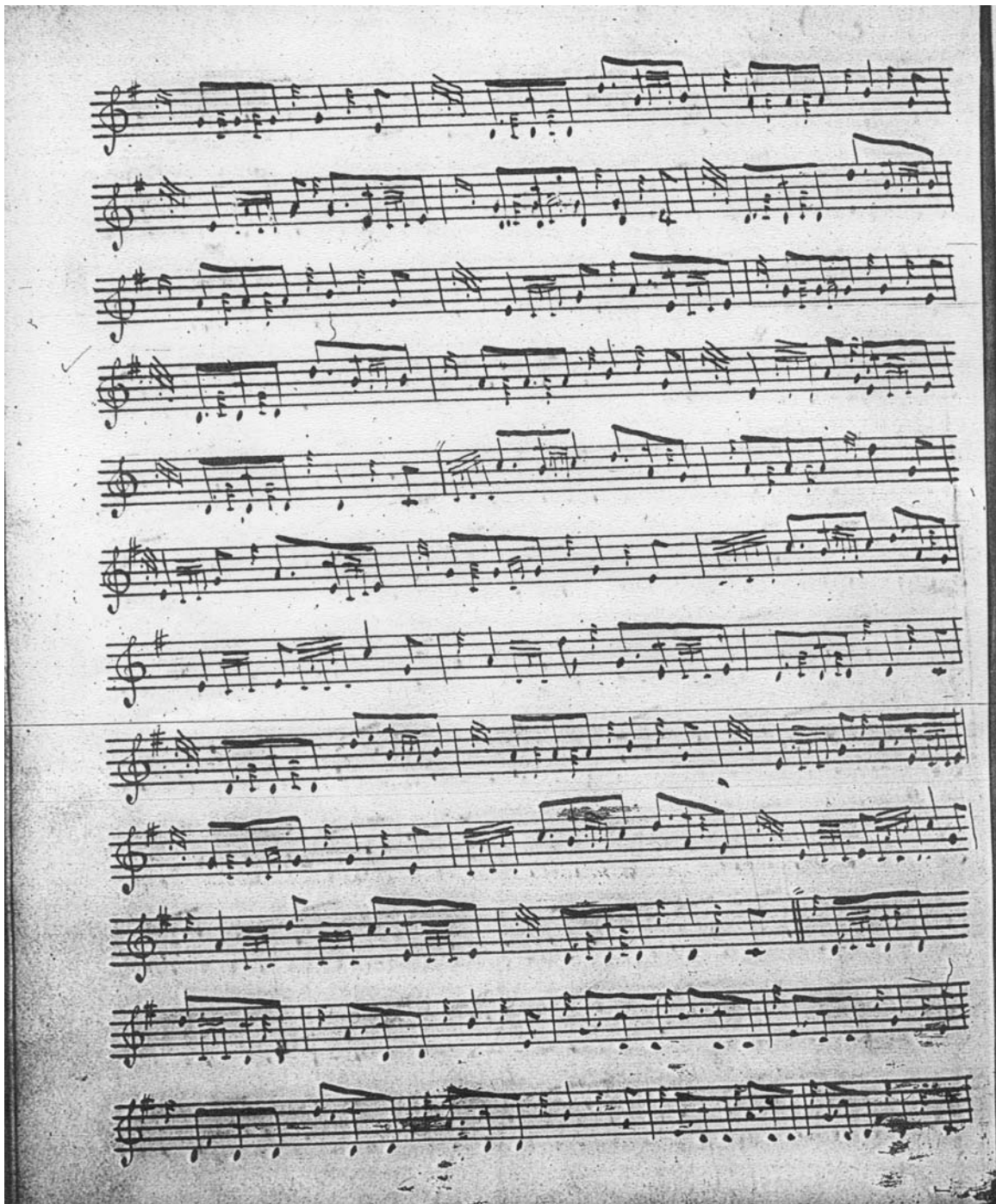
– **C. S. Thomason**, *Ceol Mor*, p.199;

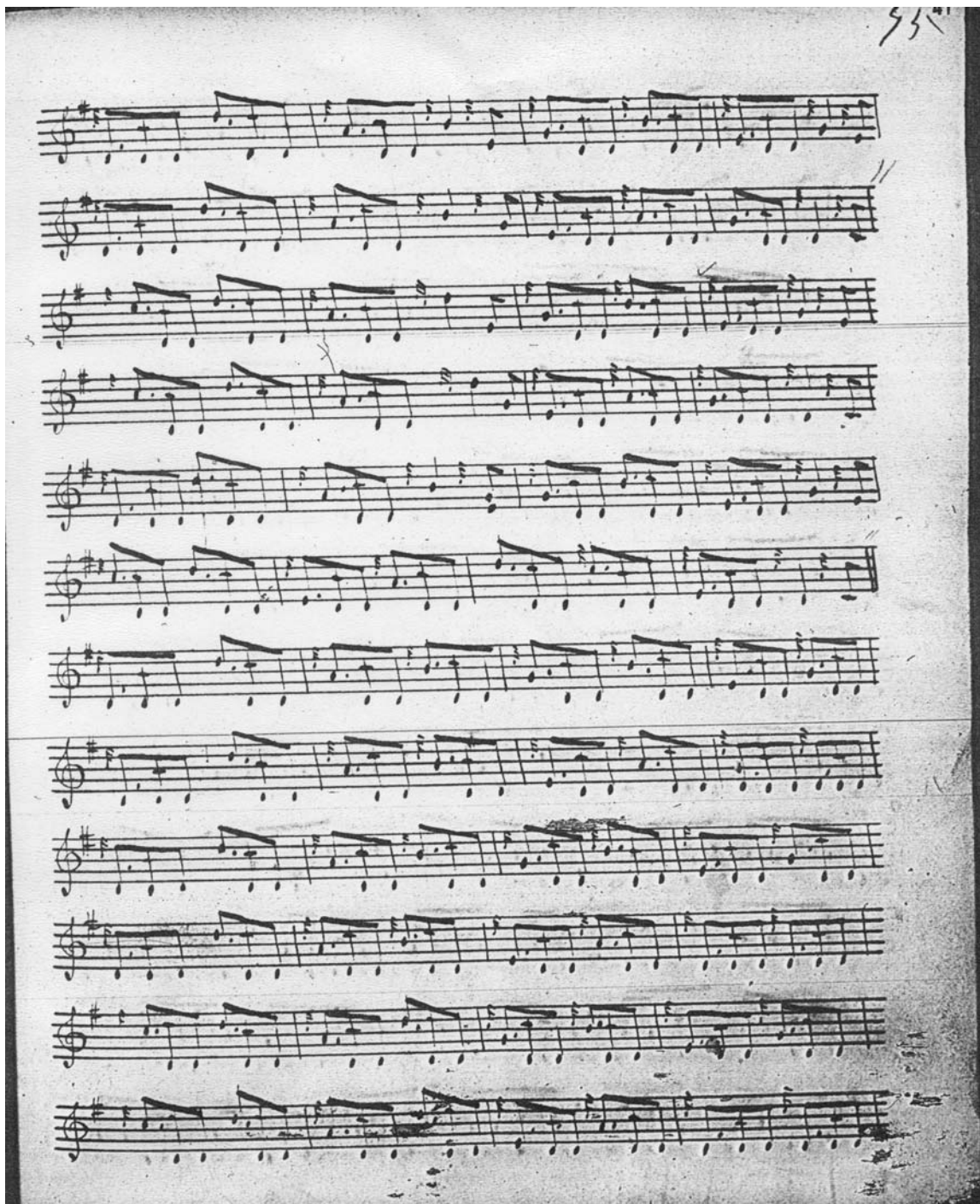
– **David Glen**, *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.185-7;

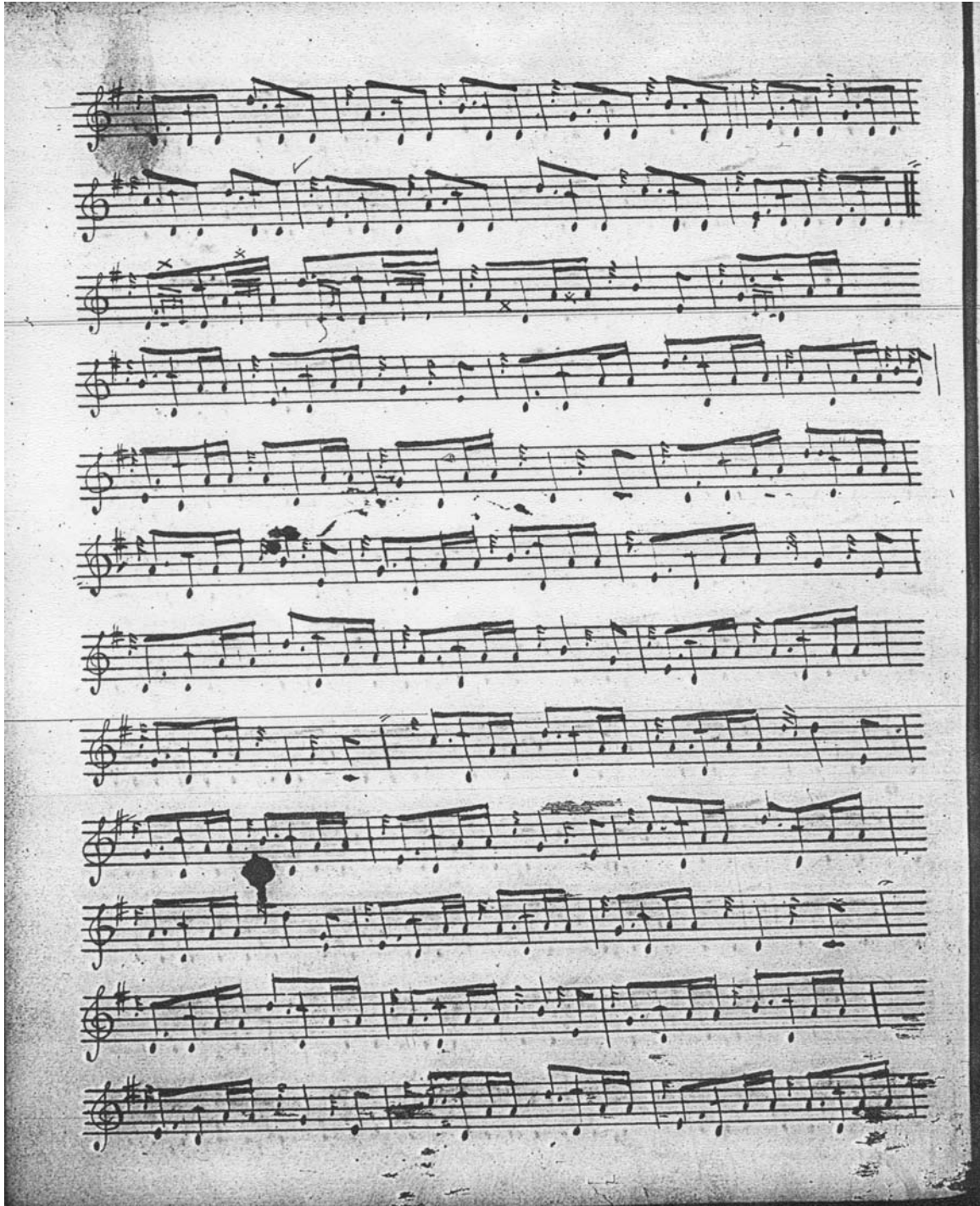
– **G. F. Ross**, *Some Piobaireachd Studies*, p.35.

The MacArthur-MacGregor MS sets the tune like this:













There are a number of interesting features in the **MacArthur/MacGregor** setting including the step-up in tempo in the first variation suggested by the *moderato* marking and the switch from 3/4 to 6/8 time; the little reflexive F gracenotes before the double echo beats on E, and the fact that there is no indication the ground should be repeated at the end of the

taorluath doubling and the concluding a mach (a rather surprising feature given the tonality of the tune) timed in the normal MacArthur manner with the initial B and C given at least a full quaver value and the movement on D played off an initial E. We also note the rather ambiguous comments about timing the ends of lines in the final variation by Andrew Robertson, the Highland Society of London's agent, under whose auspices the collection was compiled, which probably refer to the timing of the cadences in the crunluath singling.

Angus MacKay sets the tune as follows:

CUMHA BHAN THIGHEARNA MHC DHOMH NUILL.

Lady Macdonald's Lament.

Composed by

Angus Macarthur.

1700.

LIII.

Doubling of Part 1.

Note.- The History of each Piobaireachd, as far as known to the Editor, will be found in the Notes at the end of the Volume.

The image displays a musical score for pipes and drums, consisting of three systems of five staves each. The first system contains the main melody. The second system is labeled "Variation 1." and the third system is labeled "Doubling of Variation 1." The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble clefs, key signatures, time signatures, and note values, along with dynamic markings like *f* (forte) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The score is written in a style typical of traditional Scottish bagpipe music.

Variation 1.

Doubling of Variation 1.

The musical score consists of 12 staves of music, written in a single system. The notation is for pipes and drums, featuring a complex, rhythmic melody. The music is written in a single system, with the first staff starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' and the time signature is 2/4. The score includes several annotations: 'Crun-luath.' is written below the fifth staff, 'D.C. Thema.' is written below the sixth staff, and 'Doubling of Crun-luath.' is written below the eleventh staff. The music is characterized by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with frequent use of grace notes and slurs. The overall style is traditional Scottish bagpipe music.

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. It consists of 14 measures of music. The notation is a complex, continuous eighth-note pattern, characteristic of a treble or snare drum part. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The piece is titled 'Trebling of Crun-luath' and is attributed to D. C. Thoma.

D. C. Thoma.

MacKay's score has the usual sprinkling of typographical inconsistencies, for example the missing gracenotes in bar eighteen of the ground, and altogether his style is sparer than MacArthur/MacGregor, consistent with the move towards standardised settings promoted by the Highland Societies of London and Scotland.

His timing of the opening and concluding gestures on A is different from MacArthur's and we note also his specification of precise durations for his cadence Es. MacKay also repeats the ground at the end of the taorluath and crunluath doublings. In his crunluath a mach he plays his movements on D off an expressed B quaver (as opposed to the E in MacArthur).

C. S. Thomason cites Angus MacKay's published volume as his source and except that his melody notes are D/E rather than D/F, in bar three of his taorluath and crunluath variations (and at corresponding positions elsewhere) his score adds little to MacKay and is not reproduced here.

David Glen sets the tune like this:

LADY ELIZABETH DIANA MACDONALD'S LAMENT.¹⁸⁵

CUMHA BAIN - TIGHEARN MHIC DHÒMHNUILL.

Composed by
Angus Mac Arthur, about 1790.

Ùrlar.

78. 

Var. 1st Dùblachadh an Ùrlair.



Written



Played



From the Composer's own MS. per favour of Dr Chas. Bannatyne.

Var. 2nd Taor-luath.



Doubling of Var. 2nd Dùblachadh an Taor-luath.



Repeat Ùrlar.

Var. 3rd Crùn-luath.



Doubling of Var. 3rd Dùblachadh a' Chrùn-luath.



Repeat Ùrlar.

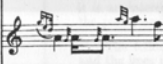
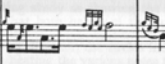
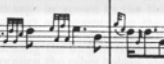
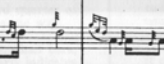
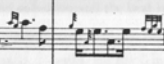
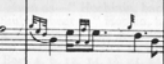
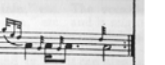

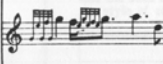

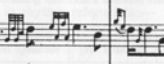
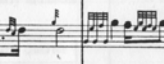


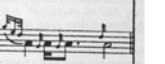

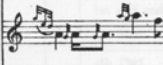


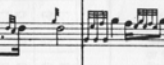
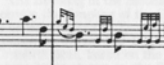

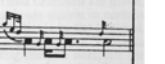

A Crùn-luath-a-mach variation may be played at pleasure.

Glen chooses 6/8 for his doubling of the ground (MacKay uses 4/4) and indicates that "A Crùn-luath-a-mach variation may be played at pleasure," but otherwise his setting is basically a typographically "cleaner" version of MacKay, and people preparing the tune from a MS or printed score might well prefer this version.

G. F. Ross's preference of duple to triple timings is in evidence once again in his notes on "Lady MacDonald's Lament" in *Some Piobaireachd Studies* (Glasg. 1926), although it is clear that he had not seen a copy of the Highland Society of London's MS which was the ultimate source of the tune:

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LADY ELIZABETH DIANA MACDONALD'S LAMENT.

Division.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
								
								
								

This tune was composed by Angus MacArthur about 1790, and consequently it is more than probable the Composer's original version exists in staff notation, and perhaps in three-four time, as the published versions are. Nevertheless writing the tune in common time brings out points not so apparent when written in three-four. Note that alternate bars end with two notes and one note, except in the third quarter of the Second and Third Lines (Division 6). This point, the change in

the third quarter of a part, is a feature often overlooked. Students of the music will find more in the tune played as above written than was manifest at the Northern Meeting in 1925, when it was one of the Junior Competition Tunes. If the Composer wrote the original version in three-four it is more than probable that he played it in common time and might as easily, and perhaps more correctly, have so written it.

It is interesting that Archibald Campbell, the Piobaireachd Society's editor, took a very similar route through this tune in volume eight of the Society's *Collection* (second series) published in 1939, although he makes no mention of Ross, and, after Ross's death, expressed a low opinion of his work, recommending that his papers, which had in the meantime come into the Piobaireachd Society's possession, should be surreptitiously destroyed (see *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society*, p. 439). One notes G. F. Ross's unusual timing of the echo beats on E and D here with the internal low As and Gs being given dotted quaver value with shortening of the subsequent note—a not unattractive effect.

Commentary:

James Logan's notes to Angus MacKay's *Ancient Piobaireachd* record that the tune was "Composed by Angus MacArthur 1790," and Logan's "Historical and Traditional Notes" add "This fine piobaireachd, was composed in 1790 by Angus MacArthur, the family Piper, on the death of Elizabeth Diana, Lady of Alexander, first Lord MacDonald, who died 18th

October 1789. It is taken from the original MSS. In possession of the Highland Society of London." (p.12).

The Lady MacDonald commemorated in this lament entertained James Boswell and Dr. Samuel Johnson at Armadale in 1773 during their celebrated tour of the Hebrides. Both writers published accounts of their travels, and the following reflections from Johnson on Sir Alexander MacDonald's piper playing "Glengarry's March" are of some interest:

As we sat at Sir Alexander's table, we were entertained, according to the ancient usage of the North, with the melody of the bagpipe. Every thing in those countries has its history. As the bagpiper was playing, an elderly Gentleman informed us, that in some remote time, the *Macdonalds* of Glengarry having been injured, or offended by the inhabitants of *Culloden*, and resolving to have justice or vengeance, came to *Culloden* on a Sunday, where finding their enemies at worship they shut them up in the church, which they set on fire; and this, said he, is the tune that the piper played while they were burning.

Narrations like this, however uncertain, deserve the notice of the traveller, because they are the only records of a nation that has no historians, and afford the most genuine representation of the life and character of the ancient Highlanders. (Dr. Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands*," in R. W. Chapman, ed., *Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* Oxford, OUP, Oxford Standard Authors, 1930, first published 1924, p.44).

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