

## The Battle of Waterloo

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

– **David Glen** MS, ff.356-9;

and in the following published sources:

– **Angus MacKay**, *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.89-92;

– **C. S. Thomason**, *Ceol Mor*, pp.167-8;

**Angus MacKay** sets the tune as follows:

# BLÀR BHATERLOO. The Battle of Waterloo.

Composed by  
John Mackay.  
1815.





Variation 2.



Doubling of Variation 2.



Variation 3.



Doubling of Variation 3.



Grun-luath.

D. C. Thema.



The musical score is written on ten staves. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The melody is highly rhythmic, consisting of many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes. A section of the score, starting on the sixth staff, is labeled "Doubling of Crun-luath." The score ends with a double bar line and a fermata on the final note.

*D.C. Thema.*

The tune is developed very much in John MacKay's characteristic manner: ground, siubhal singling and doubling, taorluath fosgailte, taorluath duinte, repeat of ground, crunluath singling and doubling with final repeat of ground. By the time we reach the taorluath fosgailte variations there are only eleven bars in line one – there should be twelve on the basis of the ground, which is 6 6 4. The siubhal seems complete: when MacKay switches to 2/4 we get the expected 12 12 8 bar pattern; but when he returns to 4/4 in the taorluath fosgailte things begin to go astray. The

pattern in the taorluath fosgailte is 11 11 8. This is easily enough mended, by simply repeating the eallach –equivalent figure throughout. From the he taorluath duinte onwards, MacKay returns to the expected 12 12 8 pattern.

**David Glen** sets the tune like this:

356

The Battle of Waterloo. John Mackay. 1815.

176

1st Var.

Doubling.

354<sup>129</sup>

*Q<sup>u</sup>-var.*

The image shows a handwritten musical score for pipes and drums. It consists of ten staves of music. The first staff is marked with a 'Q<sup>u</sup>-var.' annotation. The music is written in a style typical of traditional Scottish pipe and drum notation, with many triplets and complex rhythmic patterns. The second staff is marked with a 'Doubling.' annotation. The third staff is marked with a 'Vagr-luath.' annotation. The score is written on aged, slightly stained paper. In the top right corner, there is a handwritten number '354' with a superscript '129'. In the bottom right corner, there is a handwritten signature 'V.S.'.

*Doubling.*

*Vagr-luath.*

V.S.

358

1<sup>st</sup> time

2<sup>nd</sup> time

Doubling

1<sup>st</sup> time

2<sup>nd</sup> time

Crim-luth

359 <sup>180</sup>

1<sup>st</sup> time-

2<sup>nd</sup> time

Doubling.

1<sup>st</sup> time

2<sup>nd</sup> time

*1/2 bar on opposite page*

We may note **Glen's** substituting the "down" eallach wherever it appears, and the perfectly "round" timing of the siubhal (clearly intentional); also his more plausible timing of the taorluath fosgailte variations.

**C. S. Thomason's** score adds little to the interpretational possibilities of the tune and is not reproduced here.

### *Commentary:*

This is a typically expansive John MacKay tune, with much reiteration of the rising A-B-D/E motif and perhaps not quite enough tension in the resulting tone row to sustain a musical argument of such length. There is only one version of this tune, that given by Angus MacKay, although David Glen's recension of MacKay's score probably gives us the best playing version available.

James Logan's notes in Angus MacKay's *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, dutifully "puff" the piece:

This piobaireachd, which will bear comparison with most of the more ancient compositions, was produced by John MacKay, then with James MacLeod, Esq. of Rasay. [sic] The important part which the Highland regiments performed on this glorious occasion, is universally known, and the striking garb of the Scottish mountaineers, was no less an object of curiosity and admiration on the continent, than the peculiar music of their national instrument, the sound of which animated them to heroism; and, alas! poured forth the death dirge of many a heart that beat high in the morning, as they thought of their country, and what it expected from them in the approaching conflict. ("Historical and Traditional Notes on the Piobaireachds," p.10).

The context reflects long-term exploitation of Highland military resources by the British state; and of the outward flow of important pipers into an all-British rather than a local, Highland context, as we see in the MacKay family itself.

The tune was offered in the Edinburgh Competition of 1819, presumably as a modish new piece, nearly twenty years before its first appearance in print.

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