

The Half-Finished Piobaireachd

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

- **Colin Mór Campbell**'s "Nether Lorn Canntaireachd," ii, 36-8 (with the title "Leacran");
- **David Glen**'s MS, ff.370-371;

and in the following published sources:

- **Angus MacKay**, *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.144-5.
- **C. S. Thomason**, *Ceol Mor*, pp.175-6.

Colin Campbell sets the tune like this:

141 Called Seacran [The Half-furthest peduncate]

1st Trahohia hoo hinde hiharara hiharara
hihamban hio^{en}emto hiharin hiharin

2nd Trahohia hoo hinde hiharara hoo de
hihamban hio^{en}emto hiharin hiharin

3rd Drea hoo hinde drea hiharara hoo de
hōdin hio droōdin hihoro do hihoro do
hio droōdin hio trooam hiharin hiharin

4th Hebaemto he daendo trao hooen hio^{en}emto
hiharin hiharin

5th Taolive gear

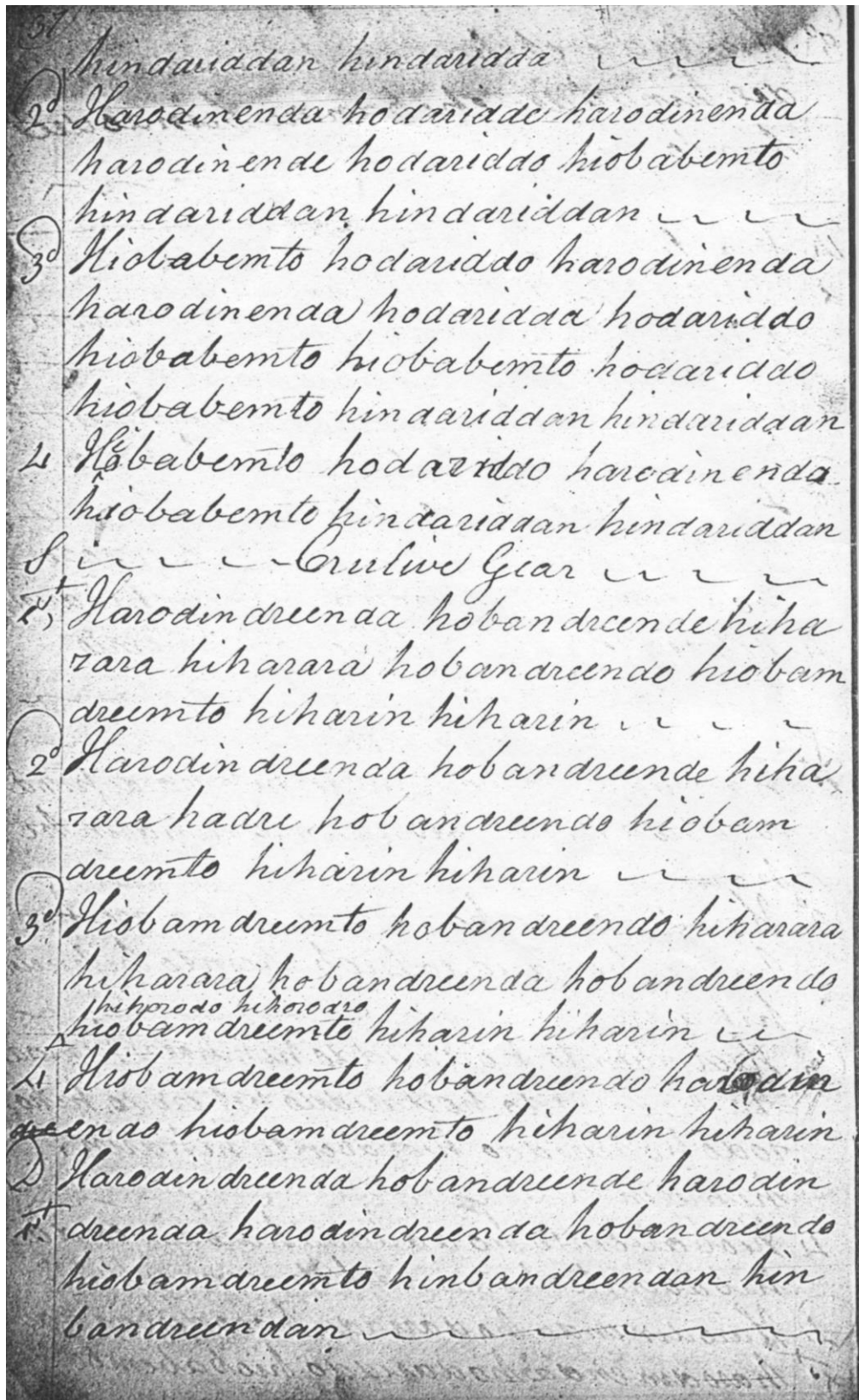
1st Harodin enda ho daariddo hiharara hihara
ra ho daariddo hio babemto hiharin hiharin

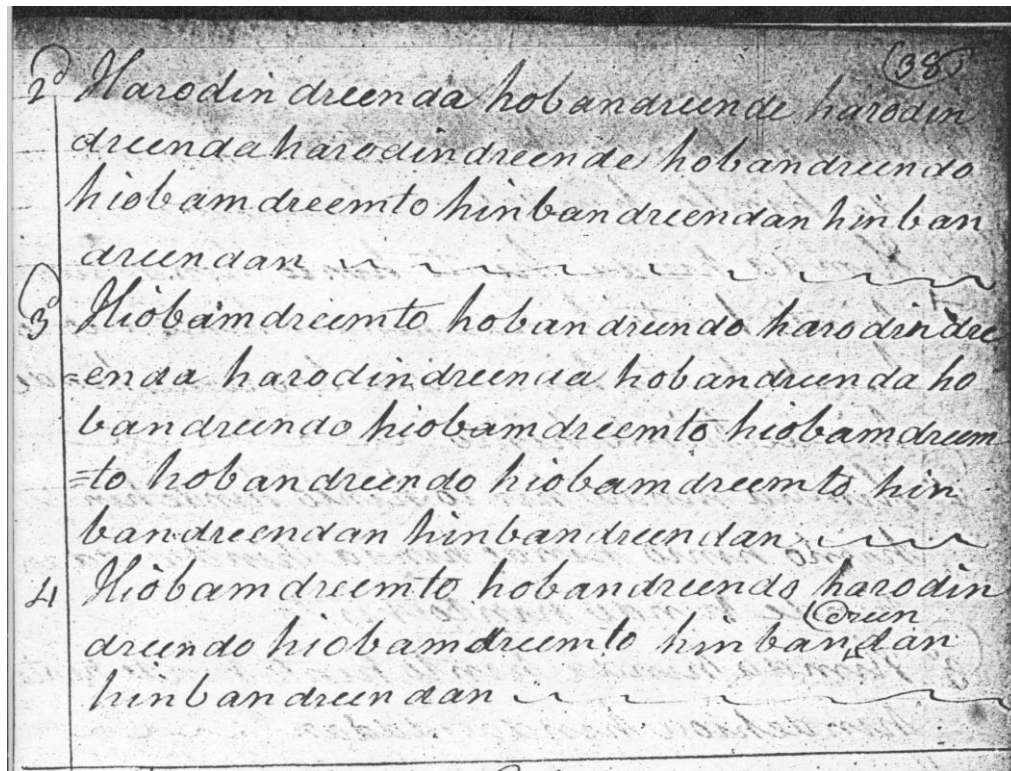
2nd Harodin enda ho daariddo hiharara hihara
hoo de ho daariddo hio babemto hiharin hiharin

3rd Hio babemto ho daariddo hiharara hihara
ra ho daariddo ho daariddo hihoro do hihoro do
ho daariddo hio babemto hiharin hiharin

4th Hio babemto ho daariddo harodin enda
hio babemto hiharin hiharin

5th Harodin enda ho daariddo harodin enda
harodin enda ho daariddo hio babemto





Colin Campbell proceeds directly from the ground to the taorluath and crunluath breabach singlings and doublings. There seems an obvious omission of a double-echo beat in line three of the ground and of the figure *hobandreendo* in the line three of the crunluath breabach singling (supplied in the staff notated version below), and I have read *hiotroem* as *hiotroenem* in line three of the ground. There are a number of second thoughts in the score above which suggests that the piece did not flow with complete confidence from the compiler's pen, but as nearly always with Colin Campbell the score shows a number of subtle little touches of expressive detail which always make his work interesting:

pipes | drums



Taolive Gear



D[oubling]





Crulive Gear



D[oubling]





The structure is unusual: three lines arranged asymmetrically, the first of four bars (repeated), the second of six, and the third of three, sustained through both ground and variations.

Angus MacKay sets the tune like this:

AM PORT LEATHACH. THE HALF FINISHED PÌOBÀIREACHD.

Composed by

Patrick Òg Mac Crummen

and

John Dall Mackay.

LV.

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. It begins with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked 'LV.' (Lento). The score consists of several measures of music, including a section labeled 'Variation 1.' and a section labeled 'Doubling of Variation 1.' which features a more complex, rapid melodic line. The score concludes with a double bar line.

Variation 1.

Doubling of Variation 1.

Variation 2.

Doubling of Variation 2.

Crun-luath.

D.C. Thema.

Doubling of Crun-luath.

D.C. Thema.

MacKay shows the same structure as Colin Campbell, three lines to the part, comprising an initial line of four bars (repeated); followed by a second line of six bars, and then a final line of

three bars. The ground is repeated after the taorluath and crunluath doublings in MacKay's usual manner. The taorluath is played "down," and the crunluath "up." MacKay's is a pleasing setting. The performer would need strong reasons to play anything else.

The seeming irregularity of this beautiful tune was a strong temptation to later editors, and C. S. Thomason offered an emendation which incorporated a double echo beat on D into the final line, to bring the length up to more plausible-seeming eighteen-bar dimensions. He gives no indication that he had intervened editorially; in the index to *Ceol Mor* the sources are given as Angus MacKay's manuscript and the teaching of Angus's nephew, Donald MacKay, who was a pupil of the Camerons and acted as the General's adviser and amanuensis. The "fix" could have originated either in the MacKay or Cameron families, and as things stand there seems no clear way of settling the point. Thomason sets the tune as follows:

THE HALF-FINISHED PIBAIREACHD.
1. 6. 9. 6.

2 vi. 3 vi.

CH. II. 176.

The image shows a musical score for a pipe tune. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has six staves, and the second system has six staves. The notation is in a traditional pipe notation style, with notes and rests. There are some markings like '2 vi.' and '3 vi.' which likely refer to specific pipe techniques or fingerings. On the right side, there is a vertical column of notation, possibly a key signature or a reference to another part of the manuscript.



There are likely to be mixed views on Thomason's solution to this apparent difficulty. His editorial amendments are often plausible and musically pleasing, but it is difficult to see what the added bar in line three contributes to the tune here. It sits rather awkwardly in its new surroundings, especially with the D melody note leading off the succeeding bar. If the circumstances of the tune's composition—given below—have been reported accurately, there may be an element of satire involved, the mocking high Gs which accord with the tune's tonality up to that point like a poke in the eye, and the abrupt enforcement of closure, a bar short of where it should be, may be deliberately ironic. And yet the tune still works beautifully as a piece of music, and is a very satisfying piece to play.

David Glen adopts Thomason's amendment in his manuscript, simply noting that the score in *Ceol Mor* does not repeat line one in the ground or variations and that this should happen throughout. With the exception that he omits Thomason's instruction to repeat the ground after the taorluath and crunluath doublings, David Glen's score was obviously made with full knowledge of Thomason's and follows the essentials of the *Ceol Mor* score rather closely. It is not reproduced here.

Commentary:

James Logan's note in MacKay's *Ancient Piobaireachd* remarks of "The Half Finished Piobaireachd" that—

This piobaireachd is so called from its having been the joint composition of Patrick òg MacCrummen, and his pupil John Dall MacKay. Patrick intending to visit MacDonald of Clanranald, then in the island of Uist, was desirous of preparing a piobaireachd suitable to the occasion, and complimentary to the Lady MacDonald, for which purpose he retired to his

private apartment. He there commenced the urlar or ground-work, two parts of which he repeated many times without being able to please himself exactly with another; when MacKay, who had placed himself to listen, unobserved at the door, struck up a measure so well adapted to those which his master had been playing, that opening the door with delight, he exclaimed, "Ah! you have done it; but it shall not bear the name I designed for it, but shall be called 'the half-finished tune,' as I made two parts, and you have made the other." The door which opened to MacCrummen's room is now closed, but the positions of the two parties are still pointed out. ("Historical and Traditional Notes," p.27).

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