

Lament for the Old Sword

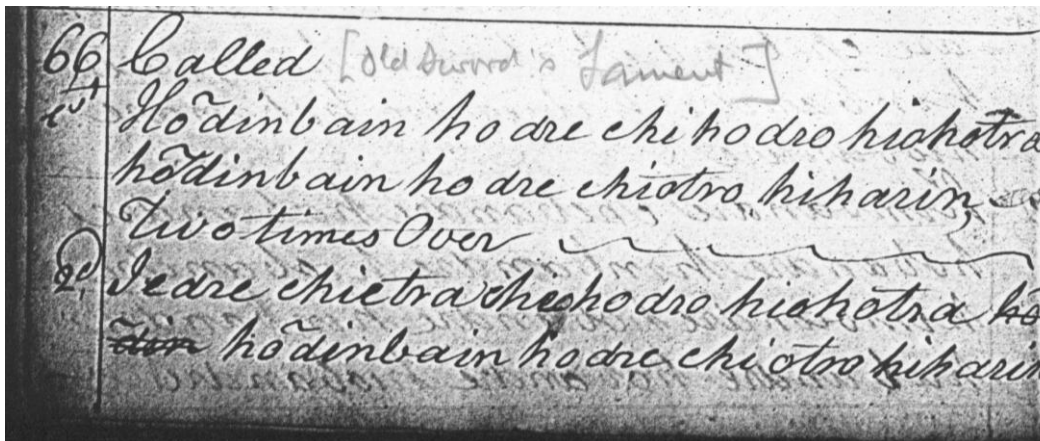
There are settings of this tune in the following manuscript sources:

- **Colin Mór Campbell's** Nether Lorn Canntaireachd, ii, 147-9 (nameless in this source);
- **Donald MacDonald's** MS, f.41;
- **Angus MacKay's** MS, ff.139-40; (and in the so-called "Kintarbert MS," ff.77-8);
- **Peter Reid's** MS, f.16;
- **D. S. MacDonald's** MS, ii, 71;

and in the following published sources:

- **C. S. Thomason**, *Ceol Mor*, p.28;
- **David Glen**, *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.12-13.

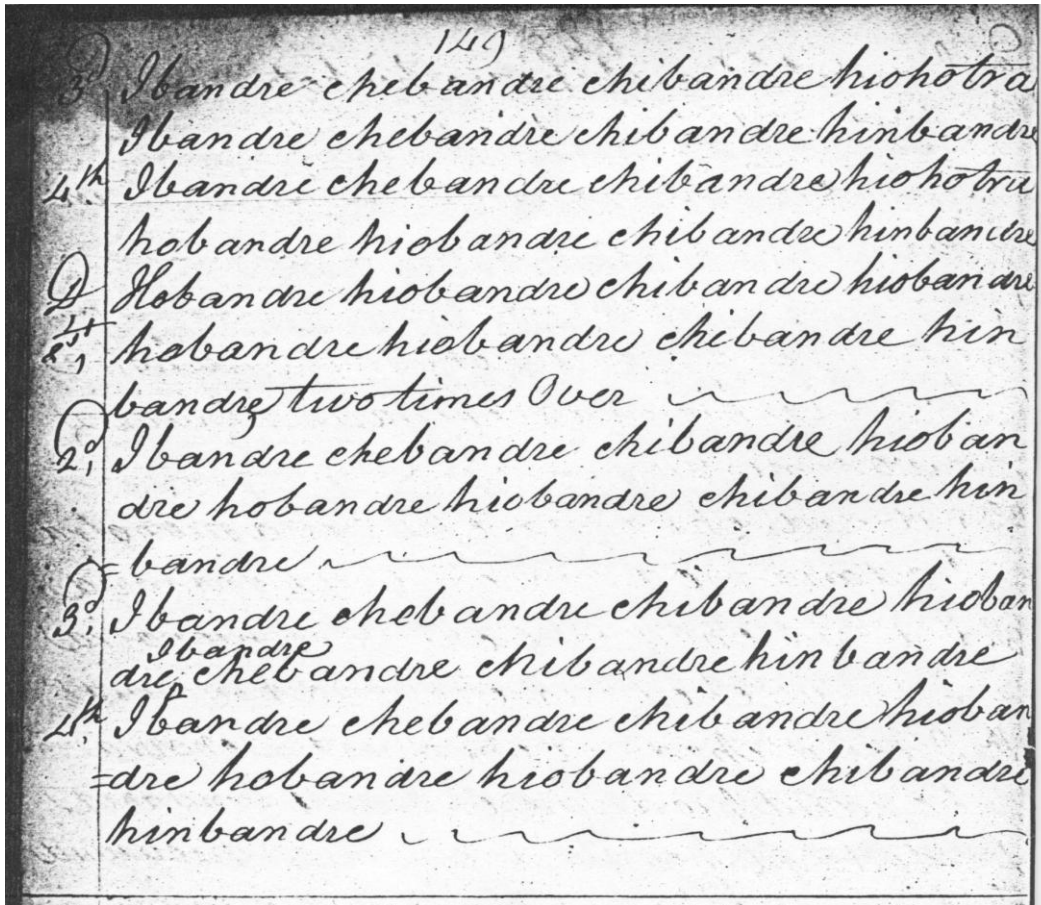
Colin Mór Campbell sets the tune like this:



pipes | drums

148
1st Je dre chietra chehodro hiohotra Je dre
chietra chehodro hio din
2nd Je dre chietra chehodro hiohotra hōdin
bain hodre chiotro hiharun
Taolive
3rd Ho darid hiodarid chidarid hiohotra
hodarid hiodarid chidarid hindarid
Two times Over
4th I darid chedarid chidarid hiohotra
hodarid hiodarid chidarid hindarid
5th I darid chedarid chidarid hiohotra
I darid chedarid chidarid hindarid
6th I darid chedarid chidarid hiohotra
hodarid hiodarid chidarid hindarid
7th Ho darid hiodarid chidarid hiodarid
hodarid hiodarid chidarid hindarid
Two times Over
8th I darid chedarid chidarid hiodarid
hodarid hiodarid chidarid hindarid
9th I darid chedarid chidarid hiodarid
I darid chedarid chidarid hindarid
10th I darid chedarid chidarid hiodarid
hodarid hiodarid chidarid hindarid
Crulive
11th Hobandre hioandre chibandre hio
tra hobandre hioandre chibandre
hinbandre two times Over
12th I bandre chebandre chibandre
hiohotra hobandre hiobandre chiba
dre hinbandre

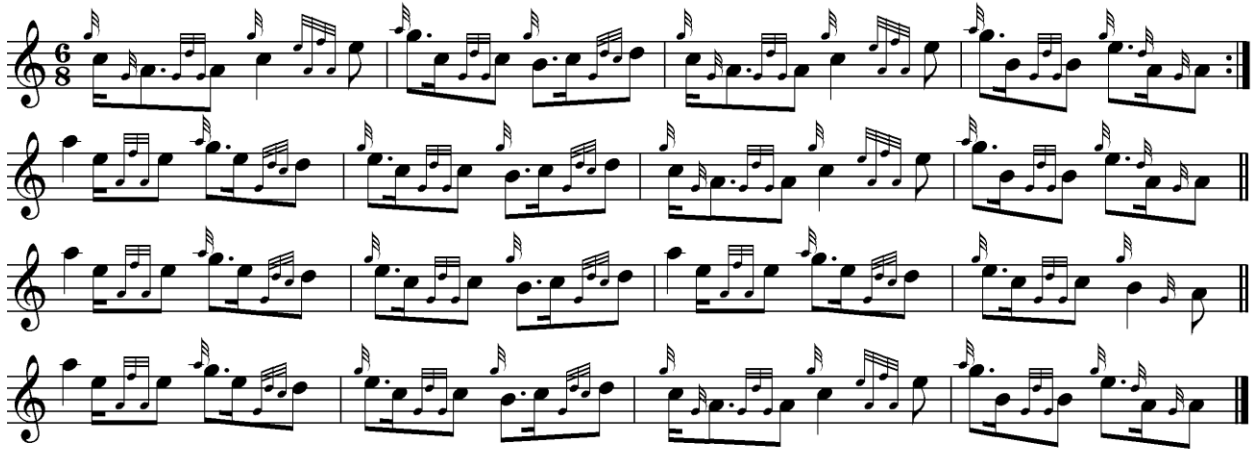
pipes | drums



There seem two distinct possibilities here with regard to how this might be realized in performance. One could do it in 6/8 time throughout:

pipes | drums

Lament for the Old Sword 6/8 time Nether Lorn



The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Lament for the Old Sword' in 6/8 time, Nether Lorn. The score is written on four staves, each beginning with a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The music consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, with some notes marked with accents. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

However, another approach is possible, namely to set the ground in 2/4 or 4/4 and the variations in 6/8. To achieve the former, it would be necessary to insert cadences in the manner familiar from later editorial approaches to Colin Mór's manuscript. These were based on the assumption that he customarily omitted such expressions, since when he wrote the placing of such gestures remained at the disposal of the performer. Proceeding thus, would give us something along the following lines:

pipes | drums

Lament for the Old Sword

Musical score for 'Lament for the Old Sword' in 2/4 time. The score consists of five staves of music. The melody is characterized by a series of eighth-note patterns, often with grace notes, and includes several repeat signs. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Taolive

Musical score for 'Taolive' in 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The melody features a consistent eighth-note pattern with grace notes and includes repeat signs. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Doubling

Musical score for 'Doubling' in 2/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The melody is a continuous eighth-note pattern with grace notes and includes repeat signs. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

pipes | drums

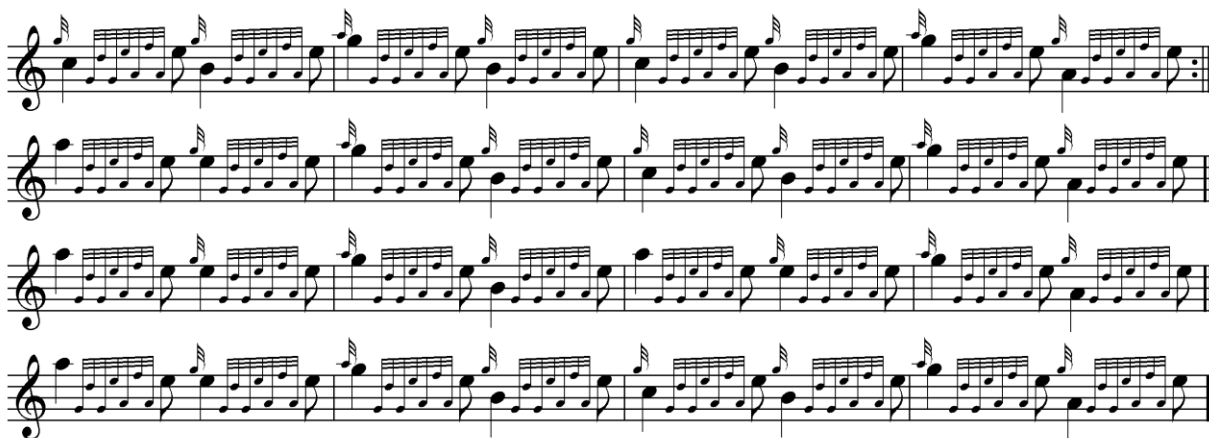
Crulive



Crulive

Four staves of musical notation for the Crulive tune. The notation is in treble clef and consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and accidentals. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Doubling



Doubling

Four staves of musical notation for the Doubling tune. The notation is in treble clef and consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and accidentals. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

pipes | drums

One notes the surging song-like phrase pattern of the melody, and the scale: hexatonic, gapped at F. The result could sound very attractive.

Competing pipers, drawn to either of these interpretations could simply hand the judges the Nether Lorn score (which is, after all, the oldest authority) and say "I'm playing that." And it would be difficult for the bench to claim that they had departed from it.

Donald MacDonald sets the tune like this:

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pipes | drums

THE SWORD'S OLD LAMENT. 41

A handwritten musical score for a piece titled "THE SWORD'S OLD LAMENT." The score is written on 12 staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The music is written in a style characteristic of traditional Scottish bagpipe notation, featuring a series of rhythmic patterns and melodic lines. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a final cadence. The number "41" is written in the top right corner of the first staff.

pipes | drums

A page of handwritten musical notation for pipes and drums, numbered 12. The score consists of 12 staves of music. The notation is dense and characteristic of traditional Scottish pipe and drum music, featuring complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines. The paper is aged and shows some wear, with a dark horizontal line near the top edge. The number '12' is written in the top left corner of the first staff.

pipes | drums

43

A page of handwritten musical notation for pipes and drums, numbered 43 in the top right corner. The page contains ten staves of music. The notation is dense, featuring many beamed notes and rests, characteristic of a complex rhythmic pattern. The ink is dark on aged, slightly yellowed paper. The staves are arranged vertically, with the first staff at the top and the tenth at the bottom. The notation includes various note values, rests, and bar lines, typical of a traditional Scottish pipe and drum tune.

pipes | drums



pipes | drums

45

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for pipes and drums. The page is numbered '45' in the top right corner. It contains ten staves of music. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation is dense, with many beamed notes and rests. The first nine staves contain musical notation, while the last two staves at the bottom of the page are empty.

Angus MacKay sets the tune like this

Cumha'n t-Seana-blaidhamh. 139
The old sword's lament.

62.

Var. 1-2

Var. 2-2

This image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for the tune 'The old sword's lament'. The title is written in Gaelic as 'Cumha'n t-Seana-blaidhamh.' and in English as 'The old sword's lament.' The page number '139' is in the top right corner. The music is written on ten staves. The first staff has a tempo marking '62.'. There are two variations marked 'Var. 1-2' and 'Var. 2-2'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

pipes | drums

140

Cresc. - f

MacKay's development of the tune is similar to Donald MacDonald's, except that he uses a slightly different tone row, coming up to B rather than A in the second bar of the opening phrase in the ground and in appropriate positions throughout the tune, with some might think rather more pleasing effect. The setting in MacKay's so-called Kintarbert MS, is merely a partially-graced transcript of MacKay's main score above and is not reproduced here.

Peter Reid's setting is a partial one, giving ground and first variation only, leaving the rest to be inferred; which, of course, in the days when the master players still retained a considerable degree of interpretative control, he could perfectly safely do:

pipes | drums



David Glen and **C S Thomason** treat the tune in a very similar fashion, unsurprisingly perhaps, since they were close colleagues at the heart of a nexus of like-minded piper-editors in the closing years of Victoria's reign. Glen times the tune like this:

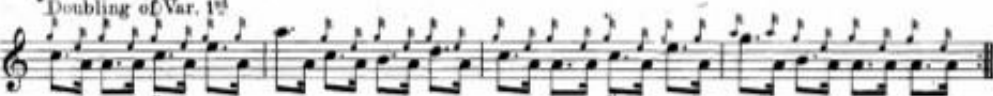
THE LAMENT OF THE OLD SWORD.

CUMHA AN T-SEANA CHLAIDHEIMH.

Úrlar.



*Doubling of Var. 1st



Var. 2nd Taor-luath.



*A Trebling of this Var. may be played thus -  Written  Played

pipes | drums

13

Dùblachadh an Taor-luath.

1st 2nd

Var. 3rd Crùn-luath.

Repeat the Ùrlar.

1st 2nd

Dùblachadh a' Chrùn-luath.

1st 2nd

Repeat the Ùrlar.

Interestingly Glen and Thomason elect to follow MacDonald rather than Angus MacKay in his treatment of the tone row coming up to C rather than B as MacDonald does in the A phrase of the ground and later variations.

Commentary:

The Lament for the Old Sword is one of the classic tunes, and likely to be found in the repertoire of even moderately accomplished players, thanks to its flowing and attractive melody line and technically satisfying variations. In his notes to Glen's *Ancient Piobaireachd*, the historian Henry Whyte, "Fionn," offers some speculative remarks about the symbolic role of the sword in Highland society, but little is known about the historical circumstances of this tune.

The Lament of the Old Sword Cumha an t-seann Chlaidheimhd. This Lament is understood to be the expressed sorrow of an old sword, which doubtless had done valiant deeds, because it was no longer of use in battle. While it may be difficult to prove that the Gael indulged in 'Sword worship,' there is no doubt he had considerable regard, nay reverence, for weapons of defence. There is a Piobaireachd belonging to the Clan Maclean called '*Claidheimh Mòr Iain Ghairbh*'—John Garve of Coll's Great Sword.'" ("Historic, Biographic and Legendary Notes to the Tunes by 'Fionn,'" p.2).

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