Lament for the Only Son

There are settings of this tune in the following manuscript sources:
–**Nether Lorn Canntaireachd**, i, 31-3;
–**Donald MacDonald**, ff.109-113;
–**Angus MacKay,** i, 83-4;
–**Colin Cameron**, ff.36-8;
–**C. S. Thomason**, f.53;
–**Robert Meldrum**, ff.147-9;

and in the following published sources:
–**Uilleam Ross**, pp.55-8;
–**Ceol Mor**, pp.91-2;
–**David Glen,** pp.96-7;
–**Piobaireachd Society Collection** (first series), ii, 10-11.

Colin Mór Campbell has three thumb variations as opposed to MacKay's two, and includes the siubhal variation shown by several other scores but not MacKay. He also stipulates a crunluath a mach, as follows:

"13th   Called Lost the Only Son"
1st   Hiharin hootro hiharin hinem, Twice Over hiharara chehodro hihorodo hioem
2[d]   Hiharin hootro, hiharin hinem, hiharara chehodro hihorodo hootro hiharara chehodro hiohorodo hioem
3[d]   Hiharin hootro hiharin hinem chehodro haotro chehodro hioem

D 1st   Hindilihootro hiharin hinem Twice Over hadili chehodro hihorodo hioem
2[d]   Hindili hootro hiharin hinem, hadili chehodro hihorodo hootro hadili chehodro hihorodo hioem
3[d]   Hindili hootro hiharin hinem, hadili chehodro hihorodo hioem

S 1st   Hindilihodili odili hinem, Twice Over hadilichedili hodili hioem
2[d]   Hindilihodili odili hinem, hadilichedili hodili hodili hadili chedili hodili hioem
3[d]   Hindili hodili odili hinem hadili chedili hodili hioem

D 1st   Hindili hodili odili hindili hindili hodili odili hindili hadili chedili hodili hiodili
2[d]   Hindili hodili odili hindili hadili chedili hodili hodili hadili [dili] chedili hodili hiodili
3[d]   Hindili hodili odili hindili hadili chedili hodili odili

S   the ssecond Motion
1st   Hinen hoen hioen hinem Twice Over haen cheen hoen hioem
2[d]   Hinen hoen hioen hinem haen cheen hoen hoen haen cheen hoen hioem
3[d]   Hinen hoen hioen hinem, haen cheen hoen hioem

D 1st   Hinen hoen hioen hinen hinen hoen hioen hinen haen cheen hoen hioem
2^d   Hinen hoen hioen hinen haen cheen hoen hoen haen cheen hoen hioem
3^d   Hinen hoen hioen hinen haen cheen hoen hioem

DD 1st Hinen hoho hiohio hinen [hinen] Twice Over, haha cheche hoho hiohio
2^d   Hinen hoho hiohio hinen haha cheche hoho hoho, haha cheche hoho hiohio
3^d   Hinen hoho hiohio hinen haha cheche hoho hiohio

S   Taolive
1st   Hindarid hodarid hiodarid hinem Twice Over hadarid chedarid hodarid hioem
2^d   Hindarid hodarid hiodarid hinem, hadarid chedarid hodarid hodarid, hadarid chedarid hodarid hioem
3^d   Hindarid hodarid hiodarid hinem, hadarid chedarid hodarid hioem

D 1st   Hindarid hodarid hiodarid hindarid hindarid hodarid hiodarid hindarid hadarid chedarid hodarid hiodarid
2^d   Hindarid hodarid hiodarid hindarid hadarid chedarid hodarid hodarid, hadarid chedarid hodarid hiodarid
3^d   Hindarid hodarid hiodarid hindarid hadirid chedarid hodarid hiodarid

S   Crulive
1st   Hinbandre hobandre hiobandre hinem Twice Over, habandre chebandre hobandre hioem
2^d   Hinbandre hobandre hiobandre hininem [sic] habandre chebandre hobandre hobandre, habandre chebandre hobandre hioem
3^d   Hinbandre hobandre hiobandre hinem habandre chebandre hobandre hioem

D 1st   Hinbandre hobandre hiobandre hinbandre hinbandre hobandre hiobandre hinbandre habandre chebandre hobandre hiobandre
2^d   Hinbandre hobandre hiobandre hinbandre habandre chebandre hobandre hobandre, habandre chebandre hobandre hiobandre
3^d   Hinbandre hobandre hiobandre hinbandre habandre chebandre hobandre hiobandre

Strulive
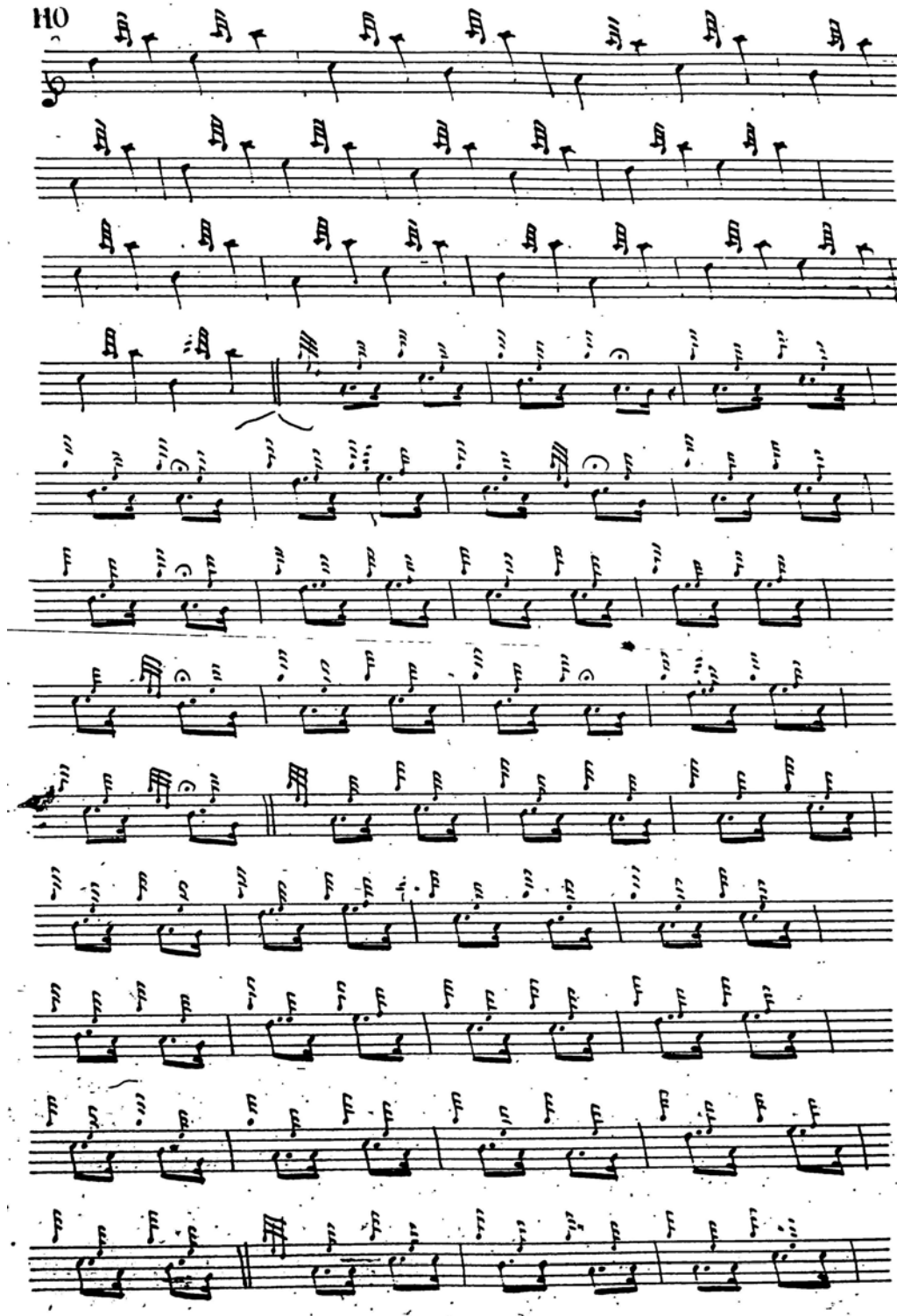1st   Hinbandre ho[dro]dre hiotrodre hinbandre hinbandre chetradre hodrodre hiotrodre &c.

The economy of Colin Mór's method is well shown in the Strulive, where he simply jots downs the A and B phrase, as above, and says "&c."

Donald MacDonald sets the tune as follows:

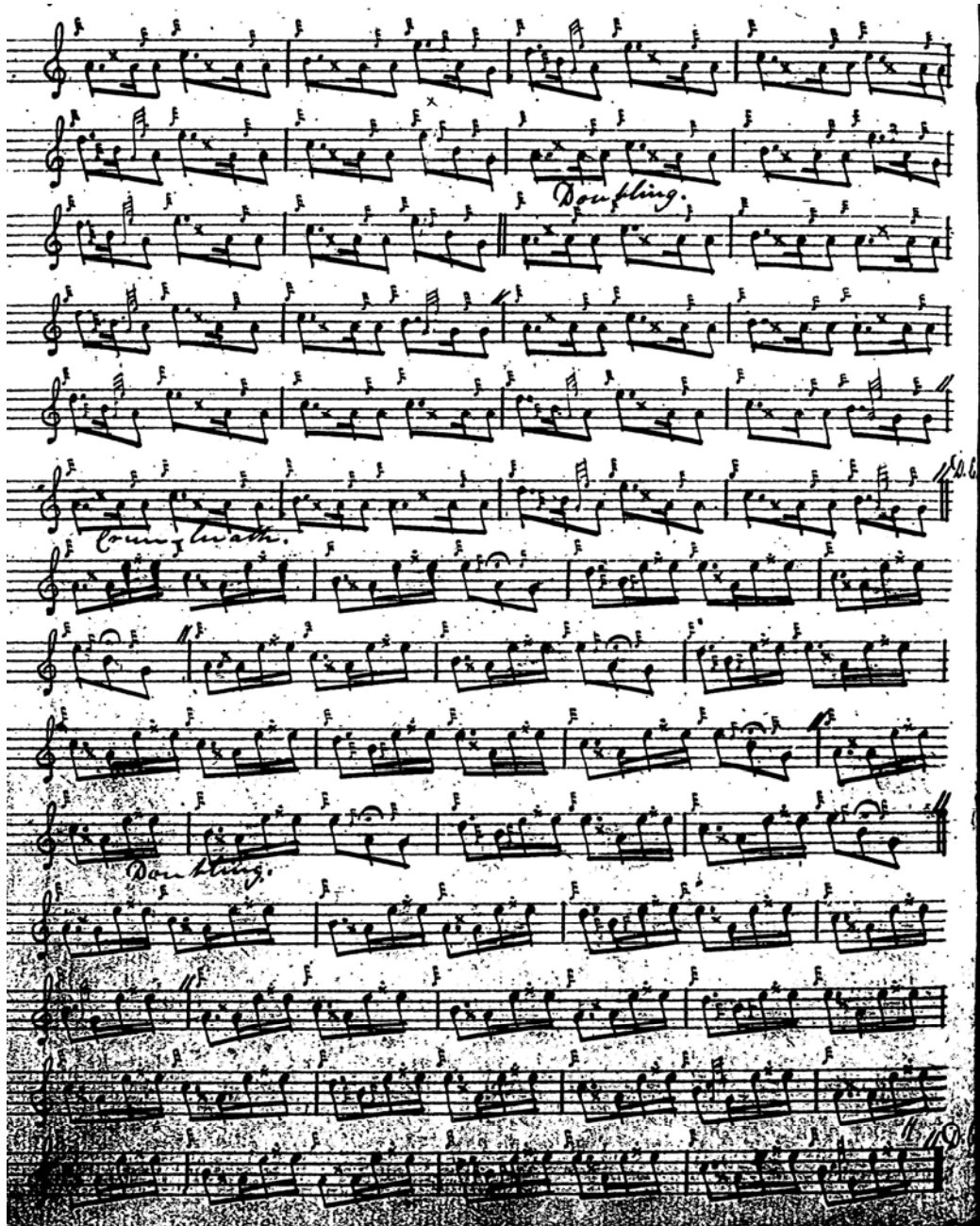THE ONLY SON'S LAMENT. (*Cumha an aon mhic.*)

109

113

Angus MacKay sets the tune as follows:

MacKay and MacDonald develop the tune differently. Many may think Donald's thumb variations are more attractive than the way MacKay does it, while MacKay often seems fussy and over-cadenced as here. MacKay doesn't have the siubhal variation, proceeding straight from the thumb variation doubling to the taorluath singling; nor does he have a crunluath a mach.

Colin Cameron has a nice turn in the thumb variation line three and more subtle indication of timing here than in earlier scores. He includes the siubhal movement (singling, doubling and trebling) MacKay omits, and ends with a note that "The Taorluadh and Cruluadh of this tune can be played into four or five parts. Colin Cameron." His own taorluath is in the form of a singling and doubling and he stipulates a crunluath a mach:

and so on.

Robert Meldrum's score adds nothing stylistically to the tune and is not reproduced here.

Uilleam Ross generally follows MacKay's way with the tune, but he retains the siubhal variation. Ross also drops the repeat of the ground at the end of the taorluath doubling, and is one of the few of the idiomatic scores not to specify a crunluath a mach. The timing of the ground is interesting, Ross holding the initial note of his A and B double echo beats as follows:

His timing of the thumb variation doubling is similar to Colin Cameron's:
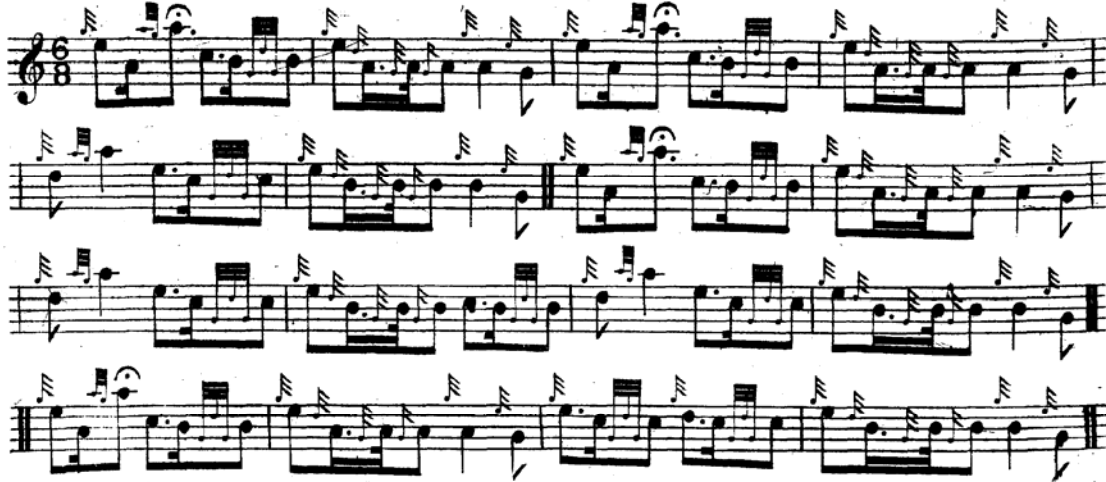
David Glen's setting shows the "down" pointing of the echo beats in the ground and the idiomatic timing of the thumb variations. He has all three siubhals, singling, doubling and trebling. Glen directs that the ground be repeated at the end of the taorluath doubling and also has a crunluath a mach:

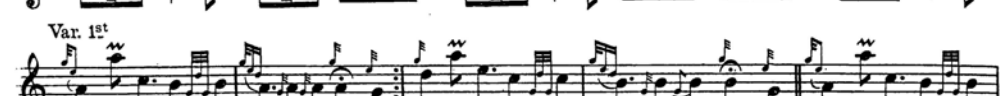THE LAMENT FOR THE ONLY SON.

CUMHA AN AONA MHIC.
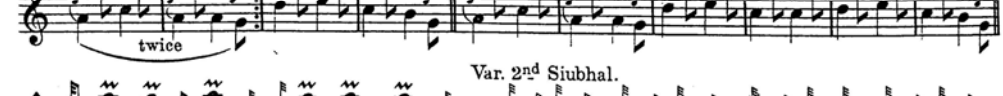
P. M. MACCRIMMON.

Var. 3rd Taor-luath.

twice

1st 2nd

Doubling of Var. 3rd. Dùblachadh an Taor-luaith.

twice

1st 2nd

Var. 4th Crùn-luath.

Repeat the Ùrlar.

twice

1st

2nd

Doubling of Var. 4th Dùblachadh a' Chrùn-luaith.

twice

1st

2nd

Trebling of Var. 4th Crùn-luath-a-mach.

twice

1st

2nd

Repeat the Ùrlar.

*The Themal Grace Notes E & D may be omitted from the Taor-luath and Crun-luath Vars. at pleasure.

Glen's instruction that "The Themal Grace Notes E & D may be omitted from the Taor-luath and Crun-luath Vars. at pleasure" (i.e. if the performer desires) is an interesting comment on

the interpretative freedom possessed by players on the very eve of the formation of the Piobaireachd Society, which was to bring this sort of thing to a halt.

C. S. Thomason's setting cites Donald MacKay and Ross's published book as his sources, noting that this was one of the tunes Donald MacKay was directly taught by Donald Cameron. He takes Uilleam Ross's route through the thumb variation singling and doubling and has the siubhal variation, but only in two parts instead of some people's three, quite sensibly; and he doesn't specify a crunluath a mach. Thomason's setting is neat and attractive, but his score adds little of substance to earlier settings and it is not reproduced here.

The **Piobaireachd Society Collection** (first series), is a fairly judicious combination of Thomason and Glen. It does not indicate that the ground be repeated after the taorluath doubling or at the end of the tune, but does have a crunluath a mach. It is not reproduced here.

Commentary:

John Johnston of Coll described the piece to General Thomason as follows:

> This was the crown of Laments of old, & was played by all noted pipers, particularly on disastrous events taking place, such as deaths of noted men, & death by accident etc.
> It is very melancholy, played very slow, & imitates the human voice pretty much, when wailing loudly at a sudden catastrophe.
> Itself & the tunes called "Coronachs" are identical, the one quite similar to the other, & played on the same occasions. ("Ceol Mor Legends," ff.152-3)

In a tune of such a fairly narrow tonal range as this– hexachordal from low G to E, contrasting two little arched phrases ACBA/DECB–the longer settings can rapidly lose their interest if played in a mechanical and unimaginative manner.

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