Finlay's Lament

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

- Donald MacDonald snr's MS, ff.88-93;
- Donald MacDonald jnr's MS, f.36;
- Angus MacKay's MS, ii, 27-28;
- John MacKay's MS, ff.1-3;
- Colin Cameron's MS, f.96;
- D. S. MacDonald's MS, ii, 89-91;
- John MacDougall Gillies's MS, f.35;
- David Glen's MS, ff.146-148 and again at ff.168-169;

and in the following published sources:

- C. S. Thomason, Ceol Mor, p.80;
- David Glen, Ancient Piobaireachd, pp.190-191;
- G. F. Ross, Some Piobaireachd Studies, p.33.

Donald MacDonald sets the tune as follows:
Dr. William Donaldson, 2011 Set Tunes
As it stands MacDonald's score does not square with modern ideas of "regularity". The variations seem in order, but the ground looks as if it is a bar short in the final line. MacDonald's barring may have been inserted by a later hand; possibly the time signature as well.

Donald MacDonald jnr.'s score seems to have a similar structural pattern to his father's, but it is in outline only and is not reproduced here.

Angus MacKay sets the tune like this:
There are structural issues with MacKay's score likewise. Although the results are musically pleasing the ground has fourteen rather than the expected sixteen bars in lines two and three.
Various solutions to these difficulties have been proposed by later editors as we shall see below.

**Donald MacKay** sets the tune in exactly the same way as his brother, Angus, and his score is therefore not reproduced here.

**Colin Cameron**'s score is seriously incomplete, his account of the tune ending at bar six of the ground. It is not reproduced here.

**D. S. MacDonald**'s score is close to its source, Angus MacKay's MS, and since it does not add to the expressive possibilities of the tune is not reproduced here.

**John MacDougall Gillies** sets the tune like this:
Here we see again the 8: 14 pattern that we saw in MacKay. However, Gillies's score is interesting in showing the relatively light emphasis continuing to be given to the opening low G until late into the Victorian period – unlike the square low G/lowA opening crotchets of *The Piobaireachd Society Collection* (second series, i, 28-30) edited by Archibald Campbell and J. P. Grant.

**David Glen** has settings of this tune in his manuscript and published book. The published version is as follows:
A LAMENT FOR GREAT FINDLAY.

CUMHA FHIONHLAIDH MHÓIR.

Úrlar.

Var. 1st Taoir-bhath.

Doubling of Var. 1st Dùbhchadh an Taoir-bhath.

Written. ♬ ♩ Played. ♬ ♩
David Glen brings lines two and three of the tune into line with contemporary ideas of "regularity" by repeating the penultimate phrase in line three of the ground, and adjusting the taorluath and crunluath variations to take account of this. It is a plausible reading and respects the antiphonal nature of the tune.

C. S. Thomason in *Ceol Mor* finds a slightly different solution to the problem, basing his ground on that of Donald MacDonald and also acknowledging input from Angus MacKay's
nephew, Donald MacKay, adding material to bring up line three to a "correct" length and then squaring the variations to follow this pattern. Thomason sets the tune as follows:

In his book, *Some Piobaireachd Studies*, **G. F. Ross** produces a detailed analysis of the structural deficiencies, as he sees them, in the settings of Donald MacDonald, Angus MacKay and David Glen. This interestingly shows the kind of reasoning that editors like Glen and Thomason may have brought to bear in producing their emendations:
Commentary:

Malcolm MacInnes criticised the Piobaireachd Society's setting of "Finlay's Lament" in a letter to the *Oban Times* in 1937. Discussing the differences between the authorities on the length of the various sections of the tune, he criticised the Society for typically failing to resolve this.

This tune is also an example of the most surprising thing in the structure of pibroch – the shortness of the third of the three sections. In most of the tunes where this shortness exists the authorities are in agreement; but here they differ, some being two bars short in the ground and all variations; some one short in the ground and full in the variations, and some two short in the ground and full in the variations. Glen's book without giving authority has the full number of bars throughout.

What is the conclusion? The P.S., as usual, draws none. It does not even pronounce an opinion as to which is the best style of this tune. ("Piobaireachd Society Publications", *Oban Times*, 30/1/1937, p.3).

In his "Historic, Biographic and Legendary Notes to the Tunes" appended to David Glen's *Ancient Piobaireachd*, Henry Whyte ("Fionn") gives the historical background to the tune:

The progenitor of the Farquharsons was Farquhar, fourth son of Alexander Ciar, the third Shaw of Rothiemurchus. Taking up their residence in Aberdeenshire, the descendants of this Farquhar were called Farquharsons. In their early history the name of Farquhar's descendant, Findlay Mór, Standard-Bearer at Pinkie, when he fell, 1547, stands
prominent, and from and after him the Farquharsons were termed "Clann Fhionnlaidh," or descendants of Findlay.

Through the kindness of Miss Farquharson of Invercauld I am enabled to give the following interesting references to this brave Highlander "Fhionnlaidh Mór" - Big Findlay:

Quotation from Lyon King-at-Arms. - I testify and make known that the Coat-of-Arms appertaining and belonging to John Farquharson of Invercauld, lawfully descended of Shaw, son of M'Duff, Thane of Fife, whose successors had the name of Shaw, son of Shaw of Rothiemurchas, chief of the whole name, came to be called Farquharson about ten generations ago, and approved of and confirmed by me to him, is matriculate in my said publick Register upon the day and date of these presents. Two Coats quarterly, First and Fourth, or a Lyon rampant, Gules armed and Languid Agies, as the paternal Coat by name Farquharson Shaw or M'Duff; Second and Third Argent; a Fir Tree growing out of a mount in base, keded proper on a chief Gule; a Banner of Scotland displayed as a canton of the first charged with a dexter hand couped at the wrist fissaies holding a dagger point downwards of the chief. The same having the Fir Tree for their sign and badge in time of battell. The banner from Findlay Mór of Invercauld, one of their predecessors being killed at Pinkie Field bearing the Royal Banner, and who lyes buried in the Churchyard of Inveresk . . . . I have subscribed this extract and cause, append my seal . . . the fifteenth day of July 1696.

(Signed) ALEX. ARESKIN, Lyon.

Findlay Mór married Beatrice, daughter of Gordon of Banchory, who afterwards married Robertson of Lude. Tradition asserts she played the harp before Queen Mary. (A Lament for Great Findlay Cumha Fhionnlaidh Mhóir p.18)

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The Battle of Pinkie at which big Finlay fell occurred in September 1547. The Scots were heavily defeated by an invading English army during the latest phase of the long-continuing great power rivalry of England and France in which Scotland was frequently embroiled as a client of the French. The Scots annals richly illustrate the dangers to small strategically-placed states of living in the purlieus of contending superpowers. Pinkie lies in East Lothian, in the neighbourhood of Musselburgh, on the normal invasion route from the south.

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