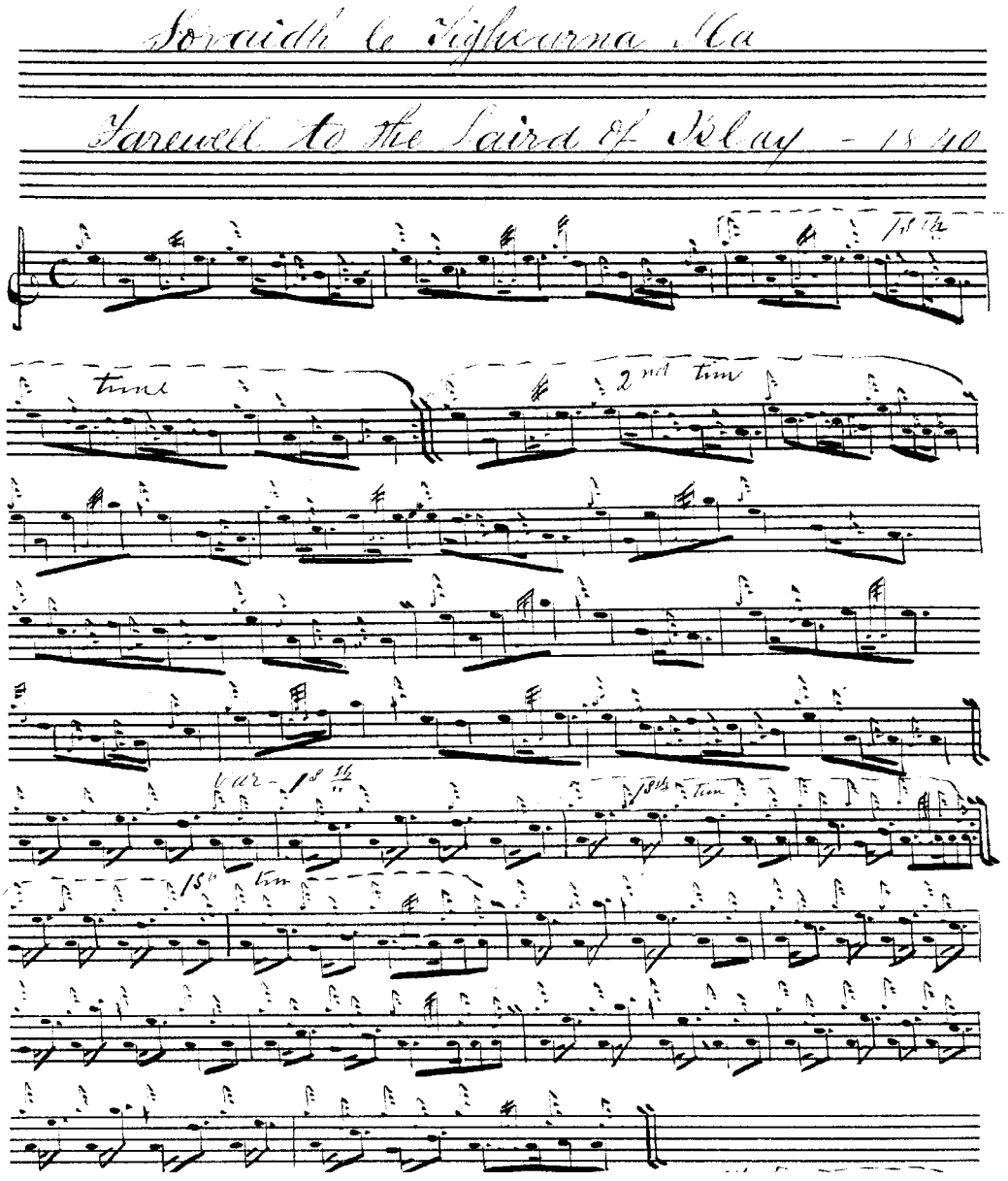
Farewell to the Laird of Islay

There is a published setting of this tune in C. S. Thomason (p.254) and manuscript settings in Duncan Campbell of Foss, (ff.127-131), and David Glen, (ff.78-80).

Archibald Campbell who edited the tune for the *Piobaireachd Society's Collection* (second series) gives as his source the MS of Duncan Campbell of Foss (ix 267), but there are the usual silent changes to note values. Duncan Campbell set the tune as follows:



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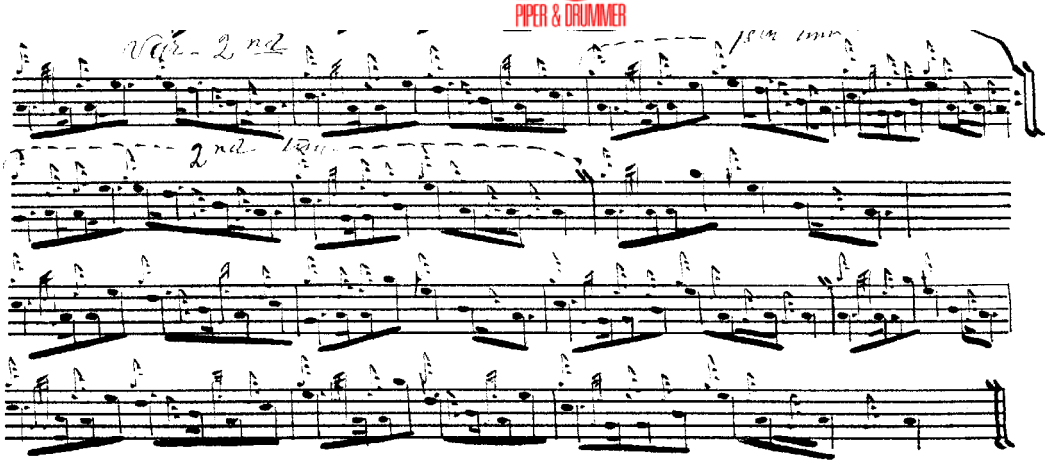
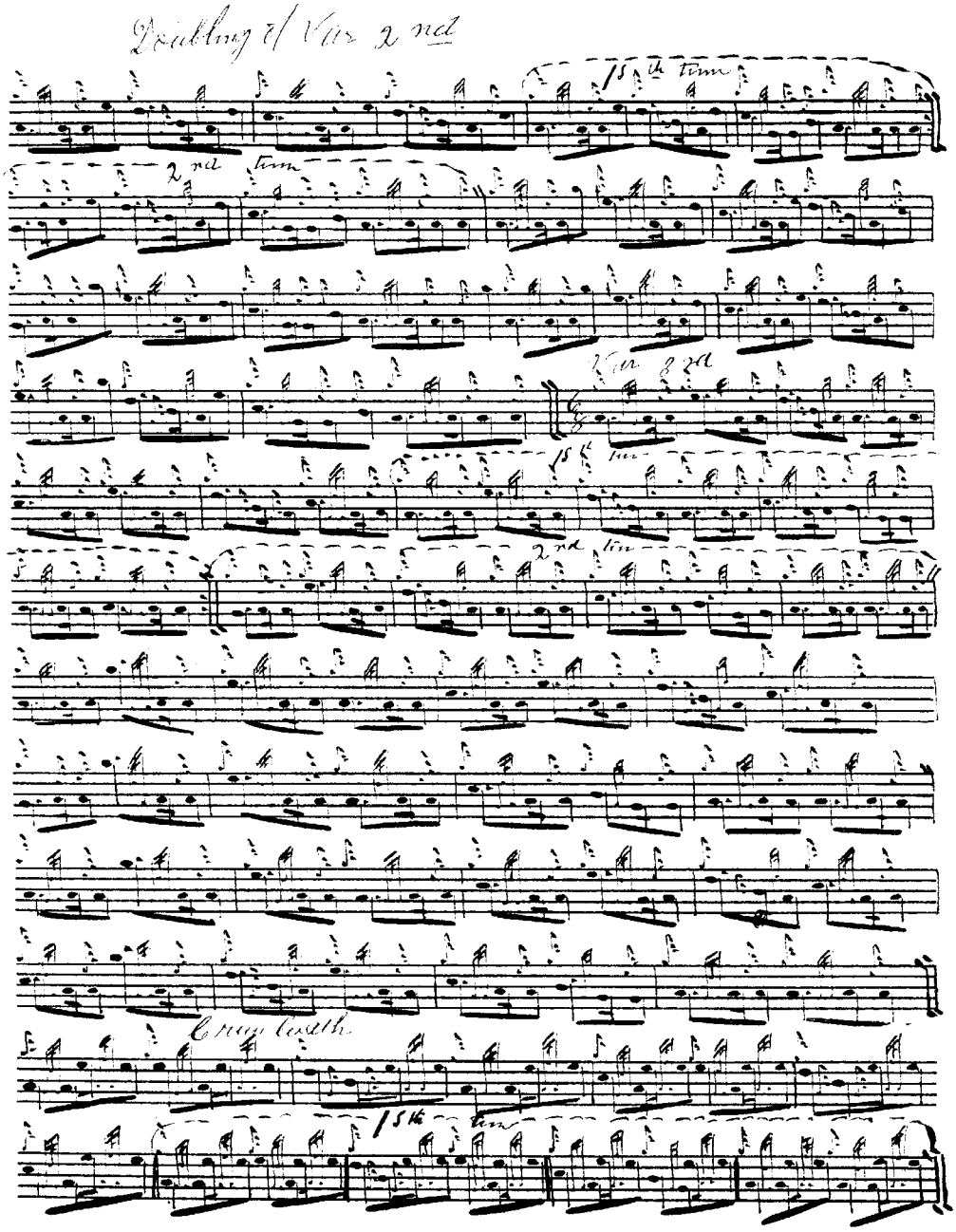
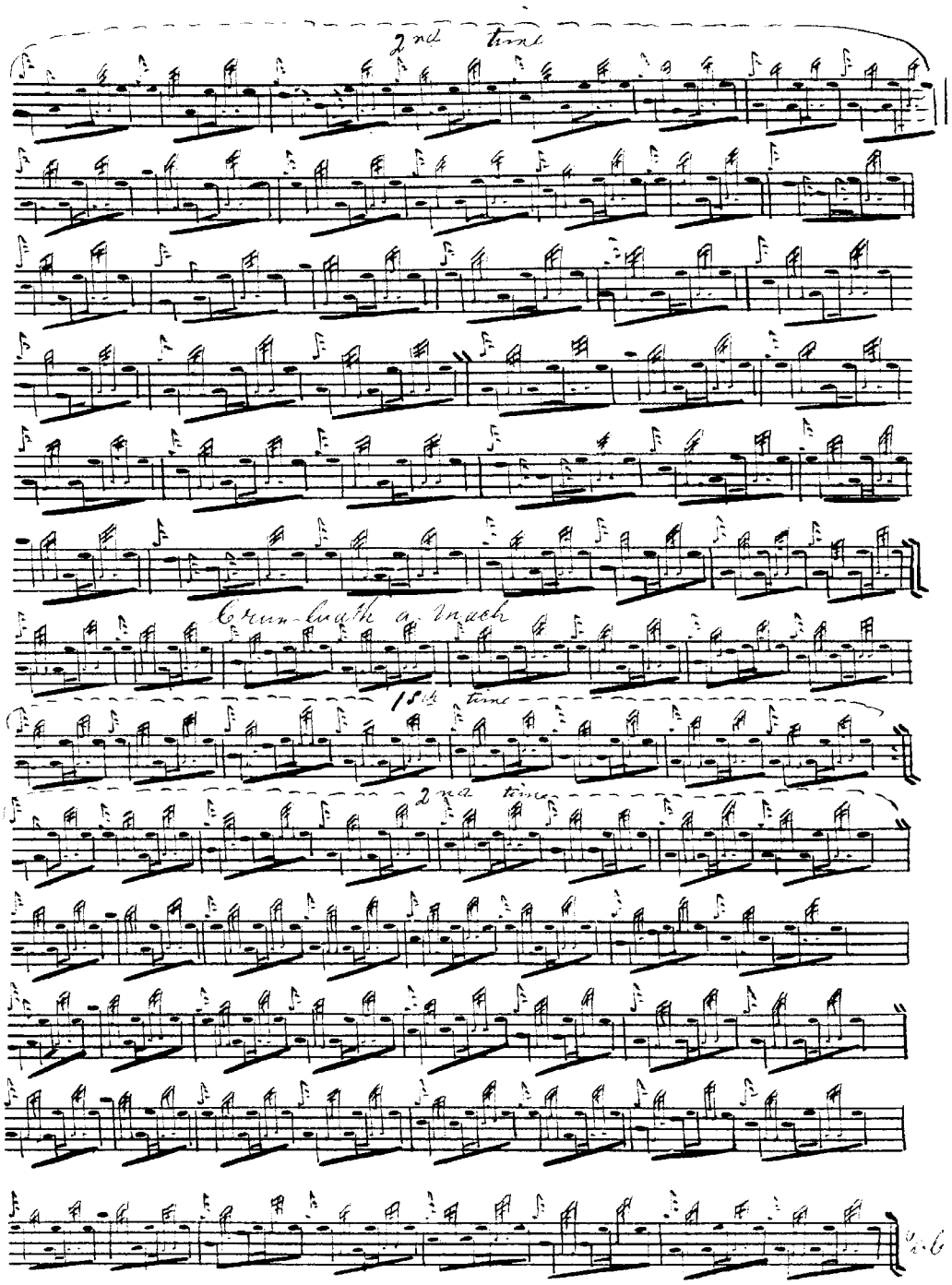
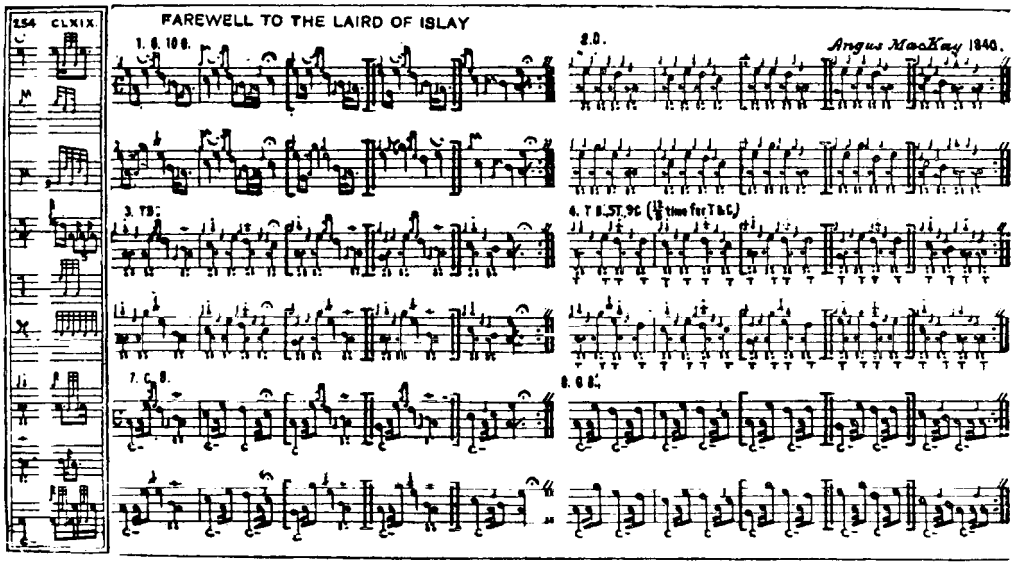



Doubling of Var 2nd
15th time
2nd time
Var 3rd
15th time
2nd time
Crunlwath
15th time


2nd time
Crun-luath a Mach
1st time
2nd time

Commentary

Some may feel that this otherwise most attractive tune eventually rather outstays its welcome; it is developed a little beyond its potential, a thing that sometimes happens with the MacKays. In addition Duncan Campbell's setting seems a bit lop-sided, with a taorluath breabach (singling and doubling) plus a taorluath duinte, followed by a crunluath duinte plus a mach. If the development were symmetrical, one would expect the pattern to be crunluath breabach (singling and doubling) followed by a crunluath duinte. C. S. Thomason proceeded to exactly this conclusion, citing Angus MacKay, Donald MacKay and Colin Cameron as his sources for the tune:



Probably the simplest thing to do would be to develop the tune either to a duinte or a breabach conclusion, but not both. One could perhaps drop the duinte taorluath and crunluath variations—so that the tune would end taorluath breabach singling and doubling/crunluath breabach singling and doubling. But this option is not available to the modern player in competitive circumstances. Indeed it is recorded that one year at Oban, Sheriff J. P. Grant of Rothiemurchus relegated his own teacher John MacDonald of Inverness (although the Sheriff himself was little more than a beginner as a player) to fourth place in a competition MacDonald had otherwise clearly won, for weeding out what he considered a redundant variation in 'The MacKay's Banner', rather than playing the official score as written.

* * *

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