MacLeod's Short Tune

There are settings of this tune in the following manuscript sources:
– Colin Campbell's "Nether Lorn Canntaireachd," ii, 73-4;
– Angus MacKay's MS, i, 77-8 (and also in his so-called "Kintarbert MS" f.75, with the title "Port Gerr Mhic Leoid, A Taunt on MacLeod or MacLeods Short Tune");
– Duncan Campbell of Foss's, MS, ff.41-2;
– Colin Cameron's MS, f.131;
– Uillem Ross's MS, ff.53-4, and also f.236;
– D. S. MacDonald's MS, i, 18-20;
– John MacDougal Gillies's MS, ff.72-3 (with the title "MacLeod's short tune a taunt on the McLeod");
– David Glen's MS, ff.41-3;

and in the following published source:
– C. S. Thomason, Ceol Mor, p. 293 (with the title "A Taunt on MacLeod")

Colin Campbell sets the tune like this:
"Piobaireachd on Two Sides of the Pond" – Dr. William Donaldson's 2012 Set Tunes Series | pipes/drums Magazine
As it stands this scarecely seems coherent with an edgy alternation of 4/4 and 6/8 bars in the ground which makes it difficult to scan. Indeed "MacLeod's Short Tune" is a piece that has given editors problems for centuries.

Angus MacKay sets the tune as follows:
MacKay points his taorluath variation "down" and his crunluath variation, by contrast, "up."
McKay may have contributed to subsequent editorial difficulties by marking the opening bar of the second part as a second repeat for the first part. MacKay has what looks like an extraneous bar—no. 5— in the first line of the first variation; and a missing bar (no.4) in the second line; he has nine bars in the first line by the time he reaches the crunluath singling, nine in the second line and six in the third, ten bars in line one in the crunluath doubling, eleven in line two and seven in line three. Yet his scores remains the basis of all subsequent attempts at emendation.

The scores of **Duncan Campbell of Foss**, **Uilleam Ross** and **D. S. MacDonald** do not add significantly to the interpretative possibilities of the tune and are not reproduced here.

"MacLeod's Short Tune" began to take on its modern form at the hands of the Cameron family and their pupils during the second half of the 19th century. **Colin Cameron** set the tune like this:
The score is incomplete, being only partially graced and develops in the variations into two lines of nine bars each.
Colin Cameron's brother Sandy's pupil, John MacDougall Gillies set it like this:
"Piobaireachd on Two Sides of the Pond" – Dr. William Donaldson's 2012 Set Tunes Series
There are visible signs of editing on the page here, with bars crossed out and inserted at various places, and a number of bars ticked as if as if having been checked against a (probably) written source. As the reader will note there are numerous differences between this setting in Gillies's hand and the version attributed to him in *The Piobaireachd Society Collection* (second series, pp.170-71).

This tune created difficulties even for the resourceful **David Glen**, as his marginalia would indicate:
"Piobaireachd on Two Sides of the Pond" – Dr. William Donaldson's 2012 Set Tunes Series
Glen resolves the tune into 4: 6 4 metre, not unpleasingly, and his score may be one of the best options amongst the emended versions. He, too, points his taorluath "down" and his crunluath "up." We know that Glen was in contact with John MacDougall Gillies and a web of late
Victorian master players and editors, so this may represent a collective conclusion, a supposition supported by General C. S. Thomason's published setting which is very similar to David Glen's except that Thomason does not repeat the first line in the ground and variations:

Commentary:

There is an intriguing similarity in style between this tune and "The Battle of Bealach nam Brog," also included in the Set Tunes series, but the usual sources are silent about its history.

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