The Stewarts' White Banner

There are settings of this tune in the following manuscript sources:
- Colin Campbell "Nether Lorn Canntaireachd," ii, 60-3 (with the title "Samuells Black dog");
- Angus MacKay, i, 128-130 (with the title "Bratach Bhàn nan Stuartach. The Stuarts White Banner");
- David Glen, f.396;

and in the following published sources:
- Donald MacDonald, Ancient Martial Music, pp.98-101 (with the title "Cumhadh Dubh Shomhairle A Doleful Lament for the Death of Samuel a Celebrated Piper");
- C. S. Thomason, Ceol Mor, pp. 348-9;
- David Glen, Ancient Piobaireachd, pp. 156-7;
- William Stewart, et al., eds., Piobaireachd Society Collection (first series), iv, 1-2;

The structure of this tune has caused difficulties for generations of editors and a number of ingenious emendations have been proposed, as we shall see below.

The Nether Lorn develops the tune through to a 'duinte' rather than a breabach conclusion favoured by the other settings, as follows. It has two sets of taorluath variations (singling and doubling in each case), a Taolive Gear and a Taolive Fadh, i.e. a taorluath breabach followed by one in duinte form, finishing with a duinte crunluath (singling and doubling). The structure seems irregular from the doubling of the Taolive Fadh onwards:

1st Hiotra cherede cherede cheoen hiotra cherede hiharara hioendam
2d Hiotra cherede cherede cheoen hioendam haendan hihambam hihambam hiotra cherede hiharara hioendam
3d Hiotra cherede cherede cheoen hiotra cherede harodea hioendam hiharin ffour times

D
1st Hiotra chedili chedili cheoen hiotra chedili hadili hioendam
2d Hiotra chedili chedili cheoen hioendam haendan hihambam hihambam hiotra chedili hadili hioendam
3d Hiotra chedili chedili cheoen hiotra chedili hadili hioendam hiharin ffour times

S
1st Hioendaen chehendaen chehendaen cheoen hioendaen chehendaen hioendaen hioendam
2d Hioendaen chehendan chehendan cheoen hioendam haendan hihambam hihambam hioendaen chehendaen hioendaen hioendam
3d Hioendaen chehendaen chehendaen cheoen hioendaen chehendeen haendaen hioendam hiharin ffour times
What are the neighbours up to? © Dr. William Donaldson
Published by pipes|drums, 2008

 pipes | drums

D
1st Hioendaen chehendaen chehendaen cheohendan hioendaen chehendaen hioembam
2d Hioendaen chehendaen chehendaen chehendan hioembam haendan himbabembam himbabembam hioendaen chehendaen hioembam
3d Hioendaen chehendaen chehendaen chehendan hioendaen chehendeen haendan hioembam hindariddan ffour times

S  Taolive Gear
1st Hiodaridda chedaridda chedaridda cheoen hiodaridda chedaridda hiodaridda hioendam
2d Hiodaridda chedaridda chedaridda cheoen hioendam haendan hihambam hihambam hiodaridda chedaridda hiodaridda hioendam
3d Hiodaridda chedaridda chedaridda cheoen hiodaridda chedaridde hadaridda hioendam hiharin ffour times

D
1st Hiodaridda chedaridda chedaridda chedariddan hiodaridda chedaridda hiodaridda hiobabembam
2d Hiodaridda chedaridda chedaridda chedariddan hiobabembam hadariddan himbabembam himbabembam hiodaridda chedaridda hiodaridda hiobabembam
3d Hiodaridda chedaridda chedaridda chedariddan hiodaridda chedaridde hadaridda hioendam hiobabembam hindariddan ffour times

S  Taolive Fadh
1st Hiodarid hadarid chedarid hadarid chedarid hadarid hioendam hiodarid hadarid hioendam
2d Hiodarid hadarid chedarid hadarid chedarid hadarid cheoen hioendam haendan hihambam hihambam hiodarid hadarid chedarid hadarid hiodarid hioendam
3d Hiodarid hadarid chedarid hadarid hadarid cheoen hiodarid hadarid chedarid chedarid hadarid hioendam hindarid ffour times

D
1st Hiodarid hadarid chedarid hadarid chedarid hadarid chedarid hiodarid hadarid hadarid hioendam hiodarid hadarid hiobabembam
2d Hiodarid hadarid chedarid hadarid chedarid hadarid chedarid hiodarid hadarid chedarid hadarid hioendam hiodarid hadarid hioendam hiodarid hadarid hioendam
3d Hiodarid hadarid chedarid hadarid chedarid hadarid chedarid hadarid chedarid hadarid hadarid hioendam hadarid hioendam hindarid ffour times

S  Crulive Fadh
1st Hiobandre habandre chebandre habandre chebandre habandre cheoen hiobandre habandre chebandre habandre hioendam habandre chebandre habandre hioendam
2d Hiobandre habandre chebandre habandre chebandre habandre cheoen hioendam haendan hihambam hioendam himbabembam hioendam hioendam
3d Hiobandre habandre chebandre habandre chebandre habandre cheoen hioendam haendan hihambam hioendam hioendam
Colin Campbell's is an interesting setting, but there are a number of corrections entered in the original score and there seem to be problems of organisation from the Taolive Fadh doubling onwards.

Donald MacDonald's rich and ornate setting contains many points of interest including a variable throw on D, the high A/G introductory movement before E echo beats, and the interesting possibilities presented by the similar movement approaching D echo beats, whether to play these long or short, as a demi-semi quaver run as written, or to give time value to the F as seems often to happen with these compound appoggiaturas; likewise with the cascading runs down from high A which prefix the eallachs at the end of the part. MacDonald sets the tune as follows:
“What are the neighbours up to?”

Published by pipes|drums, 2008
"What are the neighbours up to?"

© Dr. William Donaldson

Published by pipes | drums, 2008
The following example shows **Angus MacKay**'s timing of the ground, including differences from MacDonald in bars 5 and 6 and in line 3. The reader will also note as the tune unfolds that MacKay varies the timings of his cadences at phrase endings, sometimes accenting the initial note, sometimes cutting down to the second note of the group:
"What are the neighbours up to?"
© Dr. William Donaldson
Published by pipes|drums, 2008
C. S. Thomason gives his source as the manuscript of Angus MacKay, but he has edited the tune to bring it up to a 6 6 4 pattern throughout. The result is not unattractive even if it does not very faithfully reflect the stated source:

Thomason also published Donald MacDonald's setting under the title "Lament for Piper Samuel" (Ceol Mor, pp.42-43) and for those with access to his collection (now cheaply available in CD Rom form from www.ceolsean.com) his handling of the settings makes an interesting contrast.
David Glen takes yet another route through the tune, dividing each part into two equal measures of eight bars as follows:
This is an edited version of the score preserved in his manuscript from an original attributed by Glen to John MacKay snr., (Angus's father) which presumably Glen gained access to through the papers of his friends Lt. John McLennan and Dr. Charles Bannatyne. The Glen MS represents the tune as follows:
The Piobaireachd Society Collection (First Series) setting was produced by a subcommittee comprising Colin MacRae, John Bartholomew and Stewart MacDougall of Lunga, assisted—as they claimed—by some of the leading master players of the period, John MacDonald of Inverness, John MacDougall Gillies and Willie Ross. The relationship of the gentlemen editors and the professional pipers was a rather lofty and distant one on the part of the former. The consultation took place "on the distinct understanding […] that the Sub-Committee reserve to themselves full discretionary power as to the settings to be accepted and printed. It was […] agreed to include […] any authorised variants of the tunes selected […] it was also agreed that these variants were not to be used for competition purposes." For further discussion of this episode, see my book The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society (Tuckwell, 2000; 2nd impression, Birlinn 2008), pp.307-8. Just how much actual influence the players had over the settings in the Society's volume IV is not clear. The setting published by the Society accepts General Thomason's structural emendation while making certain changes to his pointing in the variations. The selection of this tune may have been intended as a tribute to William Stewart of Ensay, the Society's secretary and music editor, who had recently died. It was set as follows:
"What are the neighbours up to?"
© Dr. William Donaldson
Published by pipes|drums, 2008
In his book, *Some Piobaireachd Studies* (Glasg., 1926, p.46), **G. F. Ross** surveyed the various approaches to this tune down the years and tried to accommodate them to his own particular ideas of "regularity" (For more on G. F. Ross, see *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society*, pp. 350-352):
Commentary:

Little is known about this tune historically, although it has a fairly lengthy record of appearances in competition. In 1825 it was in the list of Ranald MacKenzie from Ross-shire in the Edinburgh competitions of the Highland Societies of London and Scotland and it showed up again in 1838 in the list of James MacPherson, piper to Campbell of Monzie who may have been a fairly useful player, having won the fifth prize in 1835.

From its inception the competition system has generated as much heat as light. In the BBC radio programme "Arts Review" broadcast on 8th October 1948, for example, we find writer and journalist James Barke reviewing the piping at the Oban and Inverness Gatherings. He talked of growing resistance by pipers to the "feudal officiousness of The [Piobaireachd] Society...some of these younger players...are irked, when they are not disgusted, with the servility that is expected of them...This year's decisions, some of them shocking in their incompetence, have widened the breach between the Society and the performers." He continued "Pipe-Major J. A. MacLellan cut his phrasing in The Stewart's White Banner so that many sweetly rounded phrases obtruded from his melody line like jagged ends of broken beer bottles..."

Electronic text © William Donaldson, Aberdeen, Scotland, January 2008