MacCrimmon will never return

There are settings of this tune in the following manuscript sources:
- **Nether Lorn**, i, 117-19;
- **Peter Reid**, ff.48-9;

and in the following published sources:
- **Angus MacKay's** *Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.17-20;
- **Donald MacPhee's** *Collection of Piobaireachd*, ii, 1-2;
- **C. S. Thomason's** *Ceol Mor*, p.162;
- **David Glen's** *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.74-5;
- **John McLennan's** *The Piobaireachd as Performed in the Highlands*, p.4;

Since there is little stylistic difference between the published scores of this tune, the main interest focuses on the Nether Lorn score and that of Peter Reid. Both show MacKay's brutally plain style softened by appropriate decoration. The tune is nowadays fairly seldom heard, perhaps because of the rather dull way in which it develops, narrowing down to a monotonously reiterated three note scale on D, E and F. Basically there is not enough musical variety between the A and B phrases to support the later variations, unless very artfully played.

**Colin Mór Campbell** sets the tune like this:

56    Called Cha till me tuil

1st Drevhiao, echevecheento Two times drevhiao ehaihaemto
2d    Drevhiao echevecheento, drevhiao echaihaemto Two times
3d    Drevhiao echevecheento drevhiao ehaiaemto

D 1st Drevhiao echelcheento Two times drevhiao ehalhamto
2d    Drevhiao echelcheento drevhiao ehal hamto, Two times
3d    Drevhiao echelcheento drevhiao ehal hamto

DD 1st Drelhio lehelcheento, Two times drelhio Ihalhamto,
2d    Drelhio lehelcheento, drelhio Ihalhamto Two times
3d    Drelhio lehelcheento drelhio Ihalhamto

S    First Motion
1st Chebare hebare chehare chehio chebare hebare chehio, chebare hebare harode
2d    Chebare hebare chebare chehio, chebare hebare harode Two times [Chebare hebare chebare cheho, chebare hebare harode chebare hebare harode chebare hebare harode hahio?]
3d    Chebare hebare chehare chehio chebare hebare harode hahio

D 1st Chebare hebare chebare chebare Two times chebare hebare harode harode
2d    Chebare hebare chebare chebare, chebare hebare harode harode Two times
This might suggest something along the following lines:
Of the scores in staff notation, the most interesting is probably that of Peter Reid, and shows signs of the beautifully decorated MacArthur style in which he was taught. His title is "Cha Till mi Tuille I return no more A Lament play'd at Funerals—." It is set as follows:
The compiler was obviously dissatisfied with this score; one notes his marking of the singling of the first variation as "misplaced" and the curious prolongation of line three of the ground. It is doubtful, indeed, if it is finished, and it is interesting that the compiler recorded Angus MacKay's ground of this tune on the reverse of the sheet.

There is a high degree of unity amongst the published settings. **David Glen** set the tune like this:
MACCRIMMON WILL NEVER RETURN.(1745.)

GHA TILL MACGRUIMEIN.

Composed by DONALD EAN MACCRIMMON.

Upper. Very slow.

Var. 1st

omit 2nd time.

Var. 2nd

omit 2nd time.

Var. 3rd

omit 2nd time.

Var. 4th Taor-luath.

twice

Dubhlasadh an Taor-luath.

twice

Written Played Repeat Ùrlar

"A really musical rendering": piobaireachd and Robert Bell Nicol (1905-1978) © Dr. William Donaldson
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Commentary:

This tune was formerly called simply "Cha till mi tuille." The link with the MacCrimmons was established by the writer Sir Walter Scott who used a version of the air for his original song "Lament– (Cha till suinn tuille)" which was published in the second volume of Alexander Campbell's *Albyn's Anthology* in 1818. It begins as follows:

MacLeod's wizzard flag from the grey castle sallies,
The rowers are seated, unmoor'd are the galleys;
Gleam war-axe and broad-sword, clang target & quiver,
As Mackrimmon sings, "Farewell to Dunvegan for ever."

The title was given as "Cha Till MacCriumein. MacCrummyen will never return" with an attribution to Donald Bàn MacCrimmon in Angus MacKay's *Ancient Piobaireachd* published in 1838, with historical notes by the antiquarian James Logan. For further information on this see *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society 1750-1950*, especially pages 418-420.

As Peter Reid suggested above, this tune was indeed played at funerals, including that of Calum Piobaire. In its account of this event in July 1898, the *Oban Times* reported

The remains of the deceased were interred with Highland honours in Lagganbridge churchyard – excellent pipe music being discoursed by the pipers of Cluny Macpherson of Cluny and that of the Count de Serra Largo in conjunction with the Badenoch Volunteer Pipe Band, under the able leadership of Colour-Sergeant MacDonald, Kingussie. …On arrival at the grave Mr John MacDonald, [of Inverness] piper to Count de Serra Largo, played "MacCrimmon will never return" and while the coffin was being lowered into the grave he played "The Children's Lament" – a tune taught to him by the deceased…. "Death of a well-known Champion Piper," *Oban Times*, 23/07/1898, p.2.

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