Black Wedder's White Tail

There is a setting of this tune in the following manuscript source:

– Colin Mór Campbell's "Nether Lorn Canntaireachd," ii, 144-7

It does not seem to be contained in any other written source before 1914.

Colin Mór sets the tune as follows:

---

"Piobaireachd on Two Sides of the Pond" – Dr. William Donaldson's 2012 Set Tunes Series  
pipes|drums Magazine
"Piobaireachd on Two Sides of the Pond" – Dr. William Donaldson's 2012 Set Tunes Series
Commentary:

This curiously-named tune occurs only in the Nether Lorn Canntaireachd MS. A fine bold piece if played up to time, it offers the performer many interesting interpretational choices, as discussed in the accompanying MP3 file.

The Black Wedder with the White Tail is a semi-mythical creature who featured in the disputes between the Colquhouns and the MacGregors that culminated in the Rout of Glenfruin. The story is a well-known one; it was cited by Sir Walter Scott in *Rob Roy*, and there are numerous online sources which give the details, including the following:

The old castle of Bannachra, the ruin of which stands on the rising ground in the mouth of Glenfruin behind, was in 1592 the scene of a tragic incident. In one of the feuds of the time, Sir Humphrey, chief of the Colquhouns, was beset by his enemies here. His servant was induced to betray him, and in lighting him up a stair so shone a candle on him as to make him a mark for those outside, who shot him with an arrow through a loophole. The deed has been blamed upon the Macgregors and Macfarlanes, but in Birrell's Diary it is stated that on "Nov. 30 John Cachoune was beheidit at the Crosse of Edinburgh for murthering of his auen brother, the Laird of Lusse," and as it was not John Colquhou but the next brother Alexander who succeeded Sir Humphrey, Birrell's statement seems to point to the truth. This Sir Alexander, who succeeded, was the chief who took part, eleven years later, in the conflict with the Macgregors, known as the battle of Glenfruin, The ruin of Bannachra overlooks the scene. According to the Macgregors the feud was caused by the Colquhoun Chief hanging two Macgregors who had stolen and suppered off a sheep, though they afterwards offered to pay for it. There is evidence, however, that Clan Gregor was really set on by the Earl of Argyll, who was Colquhoun's bitter enemy. Some three hundred were engaged on each side, but Alastair Macgregor, more practised in war than his opponent, divided his forces, attacked the Colquhouns in front and rear, and soon threw them into confusion. He pursued them to the gates of Rossdhu, and slew a hundred and forty of them, while he himself lost only two followers, including his brother John. Sir Walter Scott, in his novel of Rob Roy, makes the Macgregor boatmen, as they row Bailie Nicol Jarvie down Loch Lomond, entertain him with a song of triumph on the subject:

Proudly our pibroch has thrilled in Glen Fruin,
And Baunochar's groans to our slogan replied;
Glen Luss and Rossdhu, they are smoking in ruin,
And the best of Loch Lomond lie dead on her side,
Widow and Saxon maid
Long shall lament our raid,
Think of Clan Alpin with fear and with woe;
Lennox and Leven-glen
Shake when they hear again
Roderich Vich-Alpin Dhu, ho! ieroe!

But the Macgregors themselves had, after all, the most fearful cause to lament the exploit,
They followed up their victory by burning and ravishing the whole lands of Luss, and one
of them, Dugald Ciar Mhor of Glengyle, set to watch a party of schoolboys who had come
from Dunbarton to see the fight, cut short his charge by slaying them all, When Alastair his
chief met him rushing to the plunder, and asked what he had done with the students, Dugald
held up his bloody dirk and said: "Ask that!"

Such deeds were bound to bring retribution. A band of sixty Colquhoun widows paraded
before James VI at Stirling with their husbands' bloody shirts on poles, and the horrified
King gave instant orders for the punishment of Clan Gregor. Their houses were burned,
their name was proscribed, and they were hunted like wild beasts in the hills. A year later
Alastair Macgregor himself was betrayed by Argyll. The Earl undertook to convey him
safely out of Scotland, fulfilled the letter of his promise by carrying him to Berwick, then
arrested him, and brought him back to Edinburgh where he was tried, condemned, and
executed. Assuredly Clan Gregor had ample reason to curse the hour in which "the black
wedder with the white tail was ever lambed." Scott has put their resentment with vigour into
another of his songs, "Macgregor's Gathering":

Through the depths of Loch Katrine the steed shall career,
O'er the peak of Ben Lomond the galley shall steer,
And the rocks of Craig-Royston like icicles melt,
Ere our wrongs be forgot or our vengeance unfelt!

The ruin of the old castle of Rossdhu still stands beside the modern mansion of the name on
the loch-side. Among those who have been entertained within its walls was Mary Queen of
Scots, who paid a special visit here and stayed over night on 15th July, 1563.
<http://www.kellsandte.com/LochLomond/LochLomondCh04.html>

So the punning musical links to "MacGregors' Gathering" – obvious to a knowing ear – are
reinforced in the title of the tune which would signal its clan affiliations to anybody familiar with
the history of the south west Highlands.
I. Uurlar.

II. Var. I.

III. Var. II.

IV. Var. II. doubling.

V. Taorluath singling. VII. Crunluath singling.

VI. Taorluath doubling. VIII. Crunluath doubling.

IX. Crunluath a mach in usual form.

Abbreviations used
FARRAIL, GEAL, A MHubh't Dhubh
(Black Wedder's White Tail)

EDITORIAL NOTES

THIS tune is only known from the setting in the Campbell Canntaireachd. It is one of a pair — the other being entitled “White Wedder’s Black Tail.” Nothing is known as to the circumstances which led to their being given these extraordinary names; though it may be surmised that at the time when the MS. was compiled, sheep and all things connected with them were regarded with scorn and loathing in the Highlands.

There is a strong resemblance between the variations of this tune and those of “The MacGregors’ Gathering” — the ground and thumb, however, are altogether different: and the curious variation singlings are almost unique — calling to mind the cadence-placing in the singlings of the “MacDonalds’ Salute.” No Crunluath a mach is indicated in the MS., but one should probably be played.

The tune is given as follows in the MS.:—

64. Called Black Wedder’s White Tail

Line 1st . . . Hödinbain hiararin hiodinizhin hilabamn cheredhe hiharare hoidalbain hilabain hioaralin hioaralin hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabrain.
  .. 2nd . . . Cherode hiharare hoidalbain hioaralin hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain.
  .. 3rd . . . Cherode hiharare hioaralin hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain.

D. Line 1st . . . Hödinbain hioaralin hiloabain hiloabain cheredhe hoidalbain hioaralin hioaralin hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain.
  .. 2nd . . . Chedilhe hoidalbain hioaralin hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain.
  .. 3rd . . . Chedilhe hioaralin hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain hiloabain.

S. First Motion
Line 1st . . . Hoen hiren hiren hiren chehe haen hoea hiren haen haen hoea, 
  .. 2nd . . . Hiren chehe haen hoea hiren hiren haen haen hoea, 
  .. 3rd . . . Hiren chehe haen hiren hoea hiren hiren hiren.

D. Line 1st . . . Hoho hiren hioe hore scheche hah oho hiren hioe hioe.
  .. 2nd . . . Hiren cheche hah oho hiren hioe hioe hioe hioe hioe.
  .. 3rd . . . Hiren cheche hah oho hiren hioe hioe.

S. Tactile
Line 1st . . . Hoda ia hìnaa hìdinaa hìdnas ia hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa hìdinaa.
  .. 2nd . . . Himdirad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad.
  .. 3rd . . . Himdirad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad hìdarad.

D. Line 1st . . . Hadarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad.
  .. 2nd . . . Himdirad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad.
  .. 3rd . . . Himdirad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad hidarad.

S. Ceòl-saoirse
Line 1st . . . Hobandar hìbìn a hìn bhàndar hìbìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìbìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar.
  .. 2nd . . . Himdirad hìbàn a hìn bhàndar hìbàn a hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar.
  .. 3rd . . . Himdirad hìbàn a hìn bhàndar hìbàn a hìn bhàndar hìbàn a hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar.

D. Line 1st . . . Hobandar hìbàn a hìn bhàndar hìbàn a hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar hìn bhàndar.

"Piobaireachd on Two Sides of the Pond" — Dr. William Donaldson's 2012 Set Tunes Series