



"A thread of pride and self esteem..." Introduction, Set Tunes 2005.

...you are picking up a thread of pride and self-esteem
that has been almost but not quite, oh no not quite,
not ever broken or forgotten.
When you convene you will be reconvening,
with a sense of not wholly the power
not yet wholly the power,
but a good sense of what was once in the honour of your grasp.

These lines are from "Open the Doors!," the Scottish poet laureate Edwin Morgan's address, given at the opening ceremony of the new Scottish Parliament building at Holyrood, Edinburgh, on 9th October 2004.

The first tune in this series is "The Lament for the Union," which recalls the Scots' rage and grief at the loss of their parliament on the Union with England in 1707. The Union was enormously unpopular north of the Border, most regarding it as "an entire surrender" of independent nationhood to English dominance. Restoration was a key aim of the various Jacobite Risings from 1708 to 1745. The next two tunes, "The Young Laird of Dungallon's Salute" and "MacDonald of Kinlochmoidart's Lament," have associations with important Jacobite families; the little known stories of these links are given in the commentary to each tune.

Although the last military encounter took place at the Battle of Culloden in 1746, the theme of independent nationhood was continued strongly thereafter by Scotland's poets and musicians. The work of the MacCrimmons and the MacArthurs flourished and Joseph MacDonald (1739-1763) wrote the first serious study of pipe music while Niel MacLeod of Gesto (1754-1836) published the first *canntaireachd* collection. From this time of extraordinary creativity we also have the composer and teacher John McKay (1767-1848, father of Angus, 1813-1859); John MacDonald who as servant of the famous Flora MacDonald, helped Prince Charles Edward Stuart to escape from Skye and was father of the Donald MacDonald (c.1767-1840) who developed staff notation for *piobaireachd* at about the time when another great figure, Colin Campbell of Nether Lorn in Argyll, was perfecting a systematic *canntaireachd* notation.

The thread continues through the 19th century with John Bàn Mackenzie (1796-1864); Donald Cameron (1810-1868) and his sons Colin (1843-1916), Sandy (1848-1923) and Keith (1855-99); Malcolm MacPherson (1833-1898) and his famous piping sons, and his grandson Malcolm R. MacPherson who in mid 20th century was to work with Dr. Roderick Ross on *Binneas is Borerraig*; William ("Uilleam") Ross (1823-91) whose pioneering *Collection* in 1869 included settings from Sandy MacDonald (1834-83), father of John MacDonald of Inverness (1865-1953); Charles Simeon Thomason (1833-1911) who continued the work of Donald MacDonald and whose *Ceol Mor* was the largest single collection of *piobaireachd* ever issued; David Glen (1853-1916) who was the most prolific publisher of pipe music yet to appear and member of another great Scottish music dynasty, his cousin John Glen producing in *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, Edinr., 1900, one of the classic accounts of Scottish song; and John McLennan (1843-1923), another notable innovator in pipe music notation and master teacher, as we see in his son "G. S.," George Stewart, McLennan (1883-1929) who was the most gifted technician of his generation.



McLennan settings are featured in the current series, including "The Lament for Captain MacDougal" and "The Lament for the Earl of Antrim." The premature death of G. S. McLennan seventy five years ago, robbed the piping world of a gifted composer and a leading advocate for the artistic freedom of the performer community.

2005 is the centenary of the birth of Bob Nicol (1905-1978) a most able and generous teacher: hence the first tune in the new year, "March for a Beginner." The commentary to this tune also shows a little of the methods of General C. S. Thomason whom I first discovered because of Bob Nicol's admiration for his work. This is followed by two tunes with Clanranald associations-- "Clan Ranald's Salute" and "Mrs MacLeod of Talisker's Salute." Bob Nicol's mother was a Clanranald MacDonald from Moidart.

A new manuscript, that of D. S. MacDonald, is featured this year. D. S. MacDonald was pipemajor of the Royal Scots and was later with the Duke of Hamilton, where he gained access to Angus MacKay's MSS which had been in the keeping of Hamilton's piper Michael MacCarfrae. He obtained the Duke's permission to publish them and set to work to produce a transcript copy-text with all MacKay's contractions written out in full. The resulting quarto volume, handsomely bound in black leather, and with a highly decorated title page in gothic script stating it to be "A Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd Music. Arranged By D. S. Macdonald Pipe Major. First Battn The Royal Scot's [sic]," and bearing a formal dedicatory page to the Duke of Hamilton is dated 1882 and is now in the National Library of Scotland (MS 3110). The key word is "arranged." This is no mere transcript. MacDonald edited the text and did so on the whole rather well. Bits missing in MacKay were supplied, inconsistencies smoothed and contradictions resolved. Above all, while evidently motivated by a deep respect for the original text, D. S. Macdonald was stylistically independent of Angus MacKay. There are sometimes things that are not in the original but his editorial approach is idiomatic and tasteful and entirely in keeping with the tradition. A second volume, MS 3111, forms a kind of interim draft out of which the fair copy was edited. MacDonald's attempts to find subscribers did not meet with success, however, and MacKay's *piobaireachd* manuscripts remain unpublished to this day.

Some sung examples are introduced this year on MP3 audio files: two tunes from the Clasp ("The Lament for the Earl of Antrim," and "The Lament for the Union"); two from the Gold Medal ("The Lament for Captain MacDougall," and "The Young Laird of Dungallon's Salute"); and two from the Silver Medal ("Lady Doyle's Salute" and "The Mackay's Short Tune").

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Aberdeen, Scotland

October 2004.