

## The Men Went to Drink

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There are settings of this tune in the following manuscript sources:

**Angus MacKay's** MS, i, 88 (and in the so-called "Kintarbert" MS, f.72);

**Colin Cameron's** MS, f.71;

**Duncan Campbell of Foss,** MS, ff.163-164;

**Uilleam Ross's** MS, ff.78-79;

and in the following published sources:

**Uilleam Ross,** *Ross's Collection of Pipe Music*, pp.11-12;

**C. S. Thomason,** *Ceol Mor*, pp.11-12;

**David Glen,** *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.158-9;

**John McLennan,** *The Piobaireachd as MacCrimmon Played It*, p.3. (with the title "The Banquet").

**Angus MacKay** sets the tune as follows:

# pipes | drums

88

*Chaidh na h-àghail*

*The Men Went to Drink.*

The image shows a handwritten musical score on aged paper. At the top left, the number '88' is written. Below it, the title 'Chaidh na h-àghail' is written in cursive, followed by its English translation 'The Men Went to Drink.' in a similar script. The music is written on ten staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. There are several annotations throughout the score: 'var.' appears on the fourth staff, and 'rio' appears on the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth staves, often with a dashed line indicating a repeat or a specific musical phrase. The handwriting is fluid and characteristic of a personal manuscript.

## pipes | drums

There are a number of issues with Mackay's setting: line three is missing from the first variation singling and doubling; in the taorluath singling and doubling, the repeat mark for the B phrase is missing in line two along with the whole of line three; the crunluath is given entire. The "Kintarbert" setting is still more sketchy with no gracenoting after the start of the taorluath singling and none of the phrase repeats in the ground marked. But the MS is so unfinished that it might be unsafe to draw firm conclusions from it. MacKay repeats the ground between the taorluath and crunluath variations; the *da capo thema* mark after the taorluath doubling is only just visible in the main MSS but clearly present in the "Kintarbert."

**Colin Cameron's** approach to the tune follows that of Angus MacKay's. The setting adds little to the musical interpretation and is not reproduced here.

**Duncan Campbell of Foss's** score also follows MacKay. The setting adds little to the musical interpretation and is not reproduced here.

**Uilleam Ross's** two settings differ in significant details. The manuscript score follows MacKay and adds nothing from an expressive point of view. It is not reproduced here. The published setting, however, takes a different route through the tune. It is a slimmer setting than MacKay's with singlings only in most of the variations, and in many respects more idiomatic timing. It may well represent the stylings of the MacDonalds of Glentruim who contributed a significant body of material to *Ross's Collection*. John MacDonald of Inverness's father, Sandy MacDonald, was piper to the Earl of Fife at Mar Lodge, a little further up Royal Deeside from Balmoral Castle, while his uncle William MacDonald, was Piper to the Prince of Wales. Ross himself, of course as piper to the Queen would have been based frequently at Balmoral during the summer months. This was the period when Deeside was very much the centre of the piping world before that role was assumed by Glasgow city towards the end of the nineteenth century. Ross sets the tune as follows:

# pipes | drums

## CHaidH NA FIR G.O.L. THE MEN WENT TO DRINK.

11

4.  
Slow.

Thumb Var:

1st Var:

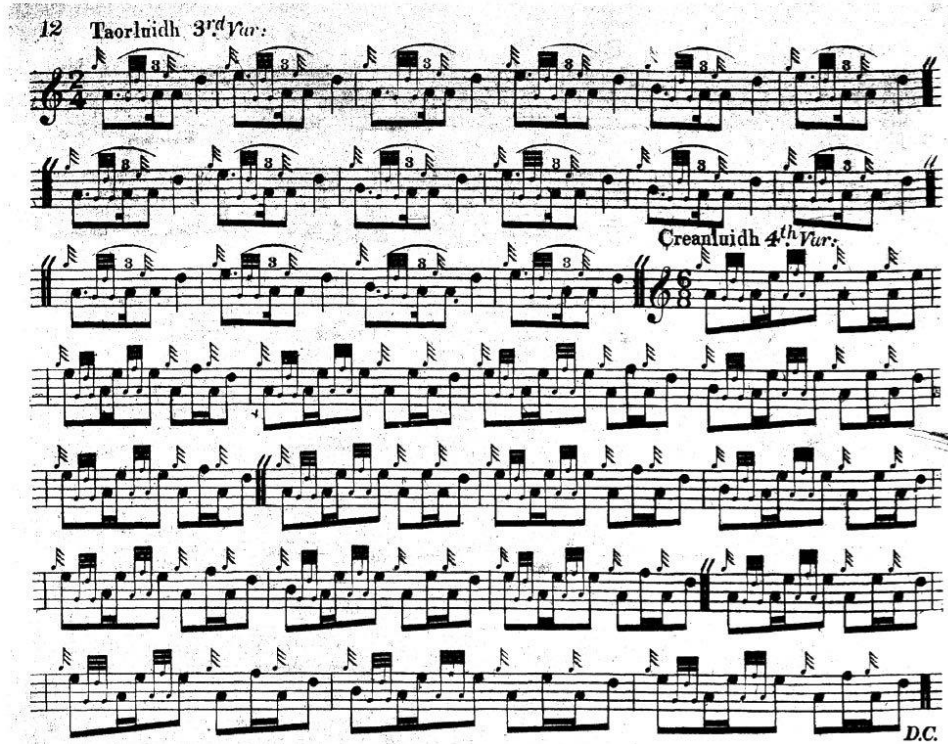
2nd Var:

V.S.

The musical score is written for a single melodic line, likely for a bagpipe. It begins with a '4.' and 'Slow.' marking, indicating the first variation is in 4/4 time. The melody consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The score is divided into four main sections: the initial slow melody, followed by 'Thumb Var:' in 2/4 time, '1st Var:' in 2/4 time, and '2nd Var:' in 6/8 time. The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble clefs, time signatures, and repeat signs. The piece concludes with 'V.S.' (Versus).



## pipes | drums



In the overall context of Ross's setting the taorluadh doubling seems a little obtrusive and might be omitted without significant loss.

**C. S. Thomason** cites amongst his sources Angus MacKay's MS, Uilleam Ross's published collection, and Donald MacKay – Angus MacKay's nephew – who was directly taught the tune by Donald Cameron. Thomason published two versions, the first, given below, with a single siubhal, the second with a singling and doubling, the singling being taken from Angus MacKay's MS version above. So perhaps the first setting he gave was as Donald MacKay reported his teacher Donald Cameron playing the tune, the second, in accordance with Thomason's developing editorial principles, being to include all the recorded variations for any given tune. Thomason's first setting is as follows:

# pipes | drums



**David Glen** gives the tune three taorluath variations, as follows:

# pipes | drums

## THE MEN WENT TO DRINK.

CHAICH NA FIR A DH'ÒL.

Ùrlar. Distinct and pointed.



Var. 1<sup>st</sup>



Var. 2<sup>nd</sup>



Doubling of Var. 2<sup>nd</sup>



Var 3<sup>rd</sup>



\* When played on Violin or Piano, all the D's in Ùrlar and Var 1<sup>st</sup> should be performed with a short shake.

## Doubling of Var. 3<sup>rd</sup>



## Var. 4<sup>th</sup>



## Crùn-luath, Breabach.



## Dùblachadh a' Chrùn-luath.



Repeat the Ùrlar



## pipes | drums

Glen's score seems to be based on combination of MacKay and Uilleam Ross, although his timing of the crunluath variations which divide the tune – which seems to depend for a good deal of its effect on its onward drive and fluency – into a succession of distinct metrical chunks might be open to question.

**Lt. Iain McLennan's** setting is of considerable interest, representing as it does a family tradition descending from at least the eighteenth century and which has been rather neglected by piping historians. Considered in the light of the evidence the McLennans seem at least as important to piping tradition as the Camerons and Macphersons. McLennan sets the tune as follows:

**The Banquet.** 1-1-2. 1-2-2. 1-2.

Ground and Thumb Vari. (1) (2)

2nd Vari.

Doubling.

Tri-lugh.

Doubling.

Ceithier-lugh.

Doubling.

One of the most striking things here is the compression and economy gained by the clever McLennan notational system, which is nearly as compact as Thomason while being typographically a good deal clearer. That and the interesting use of changing time signatures which seem intended to convey differences in tempo between the various parts. It is noticeable, too, that the tonal range narrows in the later stages of the tune, with F disappearing from the tone row from "Tri-lugh" onwards.

# pipes | drums

## *Commentary:*

The Highland historian Henry Whyte, "Fionn," has a note on this tune on p.35 of the Historical section of Glen's Collection:

"The Men went to Drink  
Chaidh na fir a dh'òl

This tune is evidently reminiscent of a spree in a wayside inn called "Tigh-an-lòin." Some of the words associated with the tune may interest pipers : –

Tha na fir ag òl  
Tha na coin a tathunn,  
Ann an Tigh-an-lòin,  
Tha na fir a tighinn,  
Uisge-beatha 's beòir  
Tha na coin a tathunn,  
Tha na fir ag òl.  
Tha na fir a tighinn.  
Chaidh na fir a dh'òl  
'Chuid nach òl sinne dheth  
Ann an Tigh-an-lòin,  
Oladh na gillean e,  
Uisge-beatha 's beòir  
Dh'òladh na gillean e  
Chaidh na fir a dh'òl.  
Phàigheadh na gillean e.  
Chaidh na fir a dh'òl, &c."

This is a series of nonsense-rhymes roughly along the following lines "The men are drinking, the dogs are barking, in Tayinloan, whisky and beer..."

Tayinloan is about half way down the long peninsula of Kintyre, on the Gigha shore. According to the *New Statistical Account of Scotland* published early in the Victorian period, the area was famous for whisky smuggling at a time when many Scots regarded it as a point of principle to evade rather than pay the whisky duty.

This tune, under the title "The Men went to Drinking" was entered for the Edinburgh competition in 1825.

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