

# CASE STUDY 11

## **GABHAIDH SINNE RATHAD MOR** (WE WILL TAKE THE HIGH ROAD)

### SOURCES

#### Pipe

Angus MacKay Ms. Vol 2 [AMcK] 1826-1840 p.19 (no. 9)

'Gabhaidh sinne Rathad Mòr. We will take the Highway.'

#### Song Text

Killin Collection [KColl.] 1884 p. 40.

An Gàidheal [AnG] 1871 vol 1 p. 288-289

### DESCRIPTION

This is a hexatonic tune with a question and answer phrasal arrangement. (See Ex 1). Identification of phrases, however, is ambiguous and the tune could either be regarded as a six phrase or a twelve phrase one. This observation is based on the only source of the tune, AMcK's Ms. version, where the whole of the first line of the tune is repeated. It can be regarded as a four-or eight-phrase tune depending on whether one treats each bar as a phrase, recognising eight phrases} or whether one regards each phrase as consisting of two bars, giving a four-phrase tune. Here it will be regarded as a standard eight-phrase tune because of the following reasons.

The melody, if not the song version, is very well known in Gaelic as well as in the Lowland musical tradition. With this knowledge, one recognises that the first line of the pibroch represents the verse quatrain of the song and the second line represents the refrain. This is not what the singer would expect; thus AMcK has placed the refrain and verse in the wrong order. In addition to this, he repeats the verse quatrain which is not a feature of the song. Therefore, if the pibroch phrasing is analysed in terms of the song form, the phrasal structure is clear. In this way, each bar of music represents a line of Gaelic song of four stresses per line. The whole pibroch melody, as with Bodaich nam Briogais, is the same as the song.

Gabhaidh sinne Rathad Mór

Ex.1.

AMcK

K Text Olc no math le Cloinn an t-Saoir Olc no math le Cl an t-S. Olc no math le Cl an t-S na bodaich mhaol an Làgain

Gabhaidh sinne rathad mor. Gabhaidh sinne rathad mor. Gabhaidh sinne rathad mor olc no math le càch e

Kill Gabhaidh sinne rathad mor. Gabhaidh sinne rathad mor. Gabhaidh sinne rathad mor olc no math le càch e

Kill Olc no math le cloinn an t-Saoir. olc no math le cloinn an t-Saoir. Olc no math le cloinn an t-Saoir. Na bodaich mhaol an Là - gain.

The refrain and verse of the song have been placed underneath the pibroch setting with the refrain corresponding to the second line and the verse to the first.

These are as follows:

Refrain: Gabhaidh sinn an rathad mór(three times)  
 Olc no math le càch e.  
 (We will take the high road/Bad or good with the rest of them-ie. whatever the consequence)

First verse: Olc no math le cloinn an t-Saoir(three times)  
 Na bodaich mhaol an Làgain.  
 (Bad or good with Clan MacIntyre/or the auxiliaries)

The song matches the pibroch very closely. However, there are one or two areas which diverge slightly. The three lowA's at the beginning of the pibroch played to the one stress or beat are a little different to how one might hear it sung. The singer would sing it in the same rhythmic manner as appears in the Killin Coll. as follows in Ex.2:



Ex.3.



Several other pibrochs have a similar melodic and rhythmic motif in the final phrase of the tune on the notes ABCABA, as for instance Spaidsearachd Bharach (AMcA no7). Where these similar endings occur, the cadences have to be played short in order to retain the rhythm as in the song. The existence of common motifs amongst different tunes can therefore give us some guidance on the rhythm of certain pibrochs even without the existence of song words with which to compare.

### CONCLUSION

The close similarity between the song and the pibroch version, in both melody and rhythm, is such that there is little reason to play the pibroch in any other fashion than what appears to be implied both by AMcK's text and the manner of the song performance. The small divergences between the song text and the pibroch one are ones which need to be adapted or changed when the pibroch performer is aware of the words of the song. The main difference for the modern pibroch player would seem to be that the tune be played at a brisk tempo and the cadences should be much shorter than in modern performance style. However, if the note values given in AMcK are applied, then the pibroch still retains the very rhythmical character of the song.

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160 from here !!*