

CASE STUDY 4A'GHLAS MHEUR  
(THE FINGER LOCK)SOURCES AND TITLESPIPES

The Campbell Canntaireachd [CC]                      c1815 Vol 2: 341 no. 48

Glass Mhoier.

Donald MacDonald's Collection[DMcD]              c1820: 7

A Ghlass Mheur Finger Lock

Song Recording

*Eirdsigh Cheannadaich*  
'Bean Earsaidh Cheannadach' [BEC]    1964    Dunvegan, Cape Breton,  
Nova Scotia . Recording held by <sup>Dr.</sup> John Shaw. 555

No title.

FIDDLE.

Patrick MacDonald's collection [PMcD ]              1784: 42

A'ghlas mheur

SONG TEXTS.

An Gàidheal <sup>1</sup>[AnG]                                      May 1874

The Scottish Highlander [SH]                              23rd April 1891

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<sup>1</sup> This is the same text as that in the Killearnan Ms. no.164 p..209

### DESCRIPTION.

This is a pentatonic tune with a compass of notes low GAB-DE in the CC and DMcD. In PMcD it is notated for fiddle and is one note higher throughout. This difference gives it a range of ABC-EF. This can be seen as follows and shows the DMcD version, without cadences, the CC version and the song text.

Ex. 1.

DMcD

CC  
AnG

hio - tro - tro hio - tro - tro him - en - to hin - daen - dan hio - tro - tro hin - daen - dan him - bam be - a him - ba bem  
 Ol òl òl òl òl òl òl òl òl òl òl òl òl òl òl òl òl òl air an daoraich, òl òl òl.

hio - tra - e - a, hio - tro - tro, hin - tro - e - a, hin - daen - dan, hio - tra - e - a, hin - daen - dan, him - bam - be - a, him - ba - bem  
 Ol air an daoraich, òl òl òl òl mar a dh'fhaodas òl òl òl, Ol air an daoraich, òl òl òl òl mar a dh'fhaodas òl òl òl.

[ DMcD's cadence runs are not relevant to the song and demonstrate yet again that the primary function of the pibroch cadence is to enhance the melodic line of the tune.]

As can be seen, the pibroch has a simple melody consisting of two phrases which are repeated and followed by a further two repeated phrases, giving eight phrases in the *ùrlar*. The first two phrases or 'line' of pibroch consist of a repeated melodic motif of B and A to low G, rising to include E and D in the penultimate vocable, *bea*, of the second phrase. It has an ABCD melodic form. (see Ex. 1) The second line, or last four phrases, consists of a rising and falling melodic line with the phrases giving a double tonic<sup>2</sup> effect.

The words of the first stanza are given in three line form in the original article, but it is not suitable to set them down in this manner because, when compared to the pibroch phrases set out in a four line format, they

<sup>2</sup> Collinson (1966: 24) defines 'double tonic' as 'the sequence of a melodic figure on a major triad followed by the same or other figure on the major triad a tone lower' He states later (p. 26) that the term has no authority, but that it is the terminology used by a piper acquaintance of his. He continues to use it, however, as a term of convenience throughout the book.

match. The words of the first two stanzas, of the <sup>a</sup>fifteen stanza song version, are as follows:

Ol, òl, òl; òl, òl, òl,  
 Ol, òl, òl; òl, òl, òl;  
 Ol, òl, òl; òl, òl, òl,  
 Ol air an daoraich; òl, òl, òl;  
     Ol, òl, òl, etc.  
 [Drink, drink, drink etc.  
 Drink on a binge, drink etc.]

Ol air an daoraich, òl, òl, òl,  
 Ol mar a dh'fhaodas, òl, òl, òl;  
 Ol air an daoraich, òl, òl, òl,  
 Ol mar a dh'fhaodas, òl, òl, òl;  
     Ol air an etc.  
 {Drink on the binge, drink, drink,  
 drink/Drink as one would wish,  
 drink, etc. }

The following is <sup>a</sup>my translation of the Gaelic introduction by D.C.MacPherson, who contributed the words to AnG:

'I will give you the ground of the music as the pipers are used to playing it; and then, I will set down verses of it, that which I have of it, as we used to sing it as a port-a-bial.'

The use of the term *port-a-bial* or 'mouth music' today is more often associated with a fairly fast tempo and a rhythm which one could dance to. However, its original meaning was probably more generic, as the term suggests, referring to any vocal interpretation of instrumental performance,<sup>3</sup> using words or vocables or both.

<sup>3</sup> Gaelic dictionaries have *port* as a tune. However, there <sup>a more specialised meaning</sup> seems to have ~~been~~ developed <sup>been</sup> a more specialised meaning of *port* which pertained to a particular type of harp tune. (see Sanger and Kinnaid 1992: 174) What is more certain is that the word referred to instrumental pieces of music. Whether or not this word could be used also to mean melody or tune in the broader sense of the word is not too clear. It may have come to mean melody in some areas but a universal term for tune in Gaelic does not appear to be in evidence. Earlier this century in the Outer Hebrides an elderly couple were asked in Gaelic what the 'tune' of a particular song was, but the specific term was not understood by the singer. This emphasises the concept of melody and words in song as being inseparable entities. Although a



One obvious feature is that the stresses of the song coincide with the themal notes of the tune and the language rhythm therefore goes well with the song text. The eight phrases of the *ùrlar* are identifiable in the arrangement of the words themselves with each pibroch phrase being the equivalent of one song couplet. The repetition of the words, implied at the end of the quatrains, is consistent with the repetition of each line of pibroch. ~~This is unusual, however, as the words have already been repeated.~~ The repetition of the couplet again may suggest that the pibroch form influenced the singing or that the song was taken from the pibroch rather than the other way round.

One would find it difficult to sing this as a slow, grave piece, not least because the song words are quite farcical. This song seems to represent a vocal imitation of pibroch style, no less valuable for serious analysis than the more poetically respected Moladh Moraig and Iseabail NicAoidh for example. It is ~~rather~~ unlikely that there <sup>was ever</sup> was a serious word text to this melody as it appears here. It also had mystical associations with the fairies in oral tradition probably on account of its curious title, <sup>this title itself</sup> which, <sup>in turn,</sup> in turn has probably been responsible for the myth that it is a more difficult tune to play than other pibrochs.<sup>4</sup>

A Gaelic singer would tend to lay more <sup>time value</sup> stress on the first òl even though each òl is presumed to have the same linguistic stress. Even at a very slow pace, one would probably detect this accent on the first one, although the contrast would not be so evident. The stresses would remain on the first òl of the three-syllable motif, even if sung at a more vigorous pace, but the rhythm is more likely to alter to one which alternates between simple time and compound time. This would result in four stresses per phrase, approximating 6/8 time, rather than common time as notated by DMcD. But, given that he has recommended the tune to be played 'very slow', it is therefore easier to understand why he notated it accordingly as:

number of different song texts exist sung to the same or very similar tune it may be that the word rhythm immediately suggests a particular melody with which it is naturally associated.

<sup>4</sup> For example, following the piping competition of 1784 in Edinburgh where A'Ghlas Mheur was a set test piece, a journalist for the Scots Magazine (October 1784: 552) wrote that the tune was 'a much admired composition, but difficult of execution'. This myth seems to have taken hold and passed down in piping tradition into the twentieth century. The supposed difficulty has probably more to do with the title which was first translated by Donald MacDonald as The Fingerlock

## Ex 2.

Ex 2.



The singer and the piper might vary the melodic stresses in relation to the vocal ones for artistic purposes alone. One would expect a singer or instrumentalist to vary the accents throughout this song particularly <sup>on account of</sup> because of the <sup>prevalence</sup> frequency of repetitive motifs. The slight change in rhythm in the last bar of each of the lines of pibroch (at the end of the second and fourth phrases) is an effective contrast. A sensitive singer or musician might also tend to contrast each motif and not sing or play exactly according to how it has been notated.<sup>5</sup> There is a comfortable tempo at which this piece can be sung and the best guide is ~~probably~~ the tempo at which the words can be most effectively communicated. From this evidence alone, ~~this would mean that~~ the modern style of performance of this *ùrlar*, which takes approximately twenty five seconds for the first two phrases, is painfully slow.

The next quatrain (Q2) clearly fits the last four phrases or 'second line' of the *ùrlar* as well:

Ol air an daoraich; òl, òl, òl;  
 Ol mar a dh'fhaodas; òl, òl, òl;  
 Ol air an daoraich; òl, òl, òl;  
 Ol mar a dh'fhaodas; òl, òl, òl;  
 Ol air an etc.

[ Drink on the binge, drink, drink, drink/Drink as one likes, drink, drink, drink, etc.]

The contrasting rhythms of the two song quatrains are correspondingly contrasted in the pibroch. The language rhythm in the second quatrain

<sup>5</sup> This seems to be a truism, but the influence of notated music in the competitive environment of pibroch today, may be to some extent responsible for the overuse of the word 'consistency' by performance critics.



clearly fits the rhythm of the pibroch and is especially evident in the continuation of *òl air an daoraich* and *òl mar a dh'fhaodas* which are represented by four notes:

Ex 3.

Ex. 3



one?

I am tempted to be slightly pedantic to emphasise the rhythmic relationship between words and tune by suggesting that the throw on D embellishment, in representing the *air an*, was more pronounced than one hears in present day performance. DMcD's throw is not only notated differently from the present day which is:

Ex 4

Ex. 4  
4.



but, in addition, piping tradition suggests that it was played in a manner which is equivalent to two syllables in contrast with one syllable as suggested by present day performance style.

The next quatrain given in the text is the same as the previous one but has '*Fonn*' in front of it, which is the refrain of the song. This means that the song refrain is represented in the pibroch by the second half of the tune [phrases five to eight. (see: Ex.1)] or what pipers would recognise as the second line. Then follows thirteen verses, the first ten of which are set out in couplet form. The *Ol air an* which is shown underneath each couplet, would seem to direct that the performer returns to the *Fonn*. However, the form of the song and melody suggests that these apparent couplets are meant to be repeated to give a quatrain which then returns to the '*Fonn*' at the end of each. It may be that the compiler omitted the instruction to repeat each couplet rather than sing it once through only. The final three stanzas which are presented as quatrains have changes in one of the lines and therefore could not have been presented in couplet form. Whatever the form of the tune, the rhythm is the most important feature. The first two couplets are as follows:

Ol air an dallanaich,  
'S òl air an daoraich.

Ol air an etc.

[Drink until blind drunk/And drink on a binge]

Bho dhallanaich gu dallanaich,  
Gu dallanaich na daoraich.

Ol air an etc.

[from blind drunkenness to blind drunkenness, to  
the blind drunkenness of a binge]

If a rhythmic picture is created using v for the unstressed syllable and - for the stressed one, then the repeated couplet above:

Bho dhallanaich, gu dallanaich

can be shown to have a rhythmic picture like:

v - v - v aich v - v - v aich } insert

This can be transcribed in the following manner:

Ex 5.

Ex. 5

Bho dhallanaich gu dallanaich

v - v v v - v v

The language rhythms in the above quatrains are more complex than in those already discussed and are not suited to the *ùrlar*. Furthermore, the first variation and its doubling does not represent a corresponding change of rhythm. The two verses above are closer to the rhythm of the *taorluath* and *crunluath* than the *ùrlar*. The eleven verses which follow these, (see appendix) the final three of which are shown below, have rhythms which change from verse to verse, as well as within a verse. The succession of verse rhythms does not represent a particular structure, although they all return to the 'Fonn', which is equivalent to the second line of the *pibroch*. Some of the verses are more easily identified with the *ùrlar* while others are more suited to the, more animated, variations.



This return to 'Fonn' may represent the practice of returning to the *ùrlar* at various stages of the performance which occurred in nineteenth century performance and earlier. PMcD's version has a return to the *ùrlar* on six occasions throughout the course of this tune. The DMcD Coll. returns to the *ùrlar* ← only once in this tune - namely after the doubling of var 2. Surprisingly, it does not indicate that it be played after the *crunluath*, even though most of the tunes in DMcD coll. have D.C. following the *crunluath*. Although one cannot make any assumptions, it is reasonable to state that there is no musical reason for not playing the *ùrlar* again. The AMcK collections recommend a return to the *ùrlar*, usually at the end of the *taorluath* variation and at the end of the tune itself.<sup>6</sup> Campbell (1953) suggested that this may be further evidence that the earlier performances were faster. At the pace at which they are played today, it is *ù*suitable both for practical and musical reasons.

buh?

muh?

In order to further clarify what has been stated, the following three quatrains, show how the rhythms of the verses contrast. The first is more representative of the second line of the *ùrlar* (phrases 5-8):

Théid sinn a dh-òl do chrò nan caorach,  
 Chrò nan gobhar, do chrò nan caorach,  
 Théid sinn a dh'òl do chrò nan caorach,  
 Théid sinn a dh-òl a dh-òl, a dh-òl.

Ol air an etc.

{We'll go drinking to the sheep fold/to the goat fold, we'll go drinking.}

The song rhythm of the above might be represented as follows:

Ex 6.

Ex 6.



The second fits the first variation or its doubling:

Chùm thu, chùm thu, chùm thu'n dé mi,  
 Chùm thu, chùm thu, chùm thu'n dé mi,

<sup>6</sup> See MacInnes (1988: 194) who identifies the recommendations of a number of notators and publishers of pipe music regarding the repetition of the *ùrlar* in performance. The evidence shows that repetition of the *ùrlar* was widespread but not systematic.

Notes?



Chùm thu'n diugh mi, chùm thu'n dé mi,  
Tinn an diugh mi, 'g òl an dé mi!

Ol air an etc.

{You kept me....yesterday; You kept me today...Sick today,  
drinking yesterday}

This might be sung in the following rhythm:

EX 7.



The third quatrain has a rhythmical 'mix' of taorluath-a-mach (DMcD's var 2 doubling) in the first couplet; a siubhal (DMcD var1) or dithis (DMcD var 1 doubling) in the third song line here, which returns to a rhythm which could be identified with both the taorluath<sup>ah</sup>-a-mach and the ùrlar, in the last line of the song:

Chùm thusa mis', chùm mis' thus',  
Chùm thusa mis', chùm mis' thus',  
Chùm thu, chùm thu, chùm thu'n dé mi,  
Tinn an diugh mi, 'g òl an dé mi!

Ol air an etc.

{You kept me, I kept you..You kept me yesterday..Sick today,  
drinking yesterday}

which might be sung in a rhythm which approximates:

Ex 8.



Recorded song version

Since this comparison of song text with pibroch was undertaken, the ~~writer~~ was given a recording of a version of this song. The BEC version's text runs as follows:

Ol, òl, òl air an daoraich,  
 òl, òl òl air an daoraich,  
 òl, òl òl air an daoraich  
 (drink etc. on a binge )

òlamaid 's pàighidh mi,  
 gu slàinte nan daoine  
 òl, òl òl air an daoraich.

(We'll drink and I'll pay/to the health of the people)

òlaidh sinn ar gartanan,  
 far ar casan caola,  
 òl, òl òl air an daoraich.

(We'll drink our garters/ from our thin legs)

òlaidh sinn ar boineadan, *bonaidean*  
 mar shatadh ris na daoine, *shadadh* ✓  
 òl, òl òl air an daoraich.

(We'll drink our bonnets,/as raise them to the people(?))

òlamaid 's pàigheamaid,  
 's òlaidh sinn 's pàidhidh sinn,  
 òlamaid 's pàigheamaid,  
 mar shatadh ris na daoine. ?

(Let's drink and pay/and we'll drink and pay/Let's drink and pay/as raise them to the people(?))

This has been transcribed by the writer as follows with the first two bars of the pibroch setting set out below this:



## Ex.9.

Ex. 9

Ol òl òl air an daor - aich, òl òl òl air an daor - aich

Ol òl òl air an daor - aich, òl - a - maid 's pà - idh - idh gu slàir - te nan daoib - e

òl òl òl air an daor - aich.

òl - aith sinn ar gart - an - an far ar cas - an caol - a, òl òl òl air an daor - aich

DMcD pibroch setting.

One can see the similarity<sup>t</sup> between the song melody and the pibroch one. The form of this song version is different from the one already analysed and instead of the repeated series of six òl òl òls which coincide with the pibroch, the melodic phrases in this example are much shorter. Each musical phrase is identified by the words 'òl òl òl air an daoraich'. The couplets which follow can each be regarded as single musical phrases however, having the same number of four stresses per phrase.

The tempo is slower than the one which I recommended from the words of the AnG. version. As the form of the recorded version is also different, this means that the melodic phrases of the BEC version cannot be used for the AnG song text. The BEC recorded version is another example of the adaptable and changeable nature of the oral tradition.

The value of this recording is that it shows that the association which D.C. MacPherson made in AnG. between the printed words and the pibroch A Ghlas Mheur was reliable.

### Canntaireachd.

As has been pointed out, the most noticeable feature of the CC in general is its lack of cadences. The unimportance of the cadence in relation to the song melody is once again evident in this case study. The number of syllables of canntaireachd is generally consistent with the notes of music and the song stresses. There are two areas, however, in which the texts might appear to be at variance. The fourth and sixth vocables in bars two and three, which are repeated in the second half of the tune, are represented by a four syllable *hindaendan* which can be represented on the staff as follows:

Ex 10



This is a four-pulse movement of GDE gracing on low A followed by the D gracenote on the final A

The three stresses of the song are coincident with DMcD's three low As. There are shortcomings in the CC. in that one cannot be sure of the manner of stressing. The vocable *hindaendan*, as one can see in the text (Ex. 1), has been distributed over the three successive low As. The *daen* suggests two pulses of music, because of its two syllables, which therefore gives the effect of a four-note motif.


The word rhythm may be useful in solving questions of misprints or omissions in the CC, although one has to be wary of taking the details of coincidences in word and music rhythm to an extreme. For example, the penultimate vocable *himbabea* in the last bar of the second phrase, at the end of the first 'line' was one syllable short in the CC appearing as *himbabe*. As it corresponds with *òl air an daoraich* one can be fairly sure that it is an omission and so this *a* has been replaced in the first line. DMcD and PMcD both have the note D to correspond with an *a* nevertheless.



A monosyllabic vocable at the beginning of the fifth phrase, ( beginning line one) has *hio tra e a* for *òl air an daoraich* , so that a monosyllabic *tra* stands for a two syllabic *air an*. Once again, this suggests that the throw on D consisted of a more pronounced two pulse movement. The next bar has *tro* of the CC for the two syllable *mar a..*

One has to be careful about giving too much musical prominence to these small differences as one should not expect the details to coincide exactly. In some circumstances, however, features can be perceived where a song has at one time been closely associated with a piece of instrumental music, so that the instrumental piece may reveal some of the finer details of language rhythm which link it to a song text. Although the CC represents a more contrived 'literary' form of recording the music, the point still holds true. The CC for the most part has each syllable representing one note of music. This observation, however, requires further research. The most important result of the comparisons is that the pibroch score, song text and CC all substantially agree and there are no areas, apart from those already mentioned, where the song rhythm is at odds with DMcD and the CC.

### Fiddle Text

Rev. Patrick MacDonald's fiddle score for the tune is interesting and informative in a number of ways. He calls it 'A bagpipe lament' above the score and indicates that it is to be played 'very slow solemn.' It also has six variations following the *ùrlar*<sup>7</sup>. Apart from it being notated a note higher, 

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<sup>7</sup> DMcD's and PMcD's variations are not named according to their characteristics, but merely by numbers. None of the singling variations or their equivalents have cadences as in modern pibroch performance.

For the present day pibroch player, these can be identified as follows:

Var 1 - siubhal; stressing the themal notes and connecting the motifs with a lowA.

Var 1 doubling dithis; ie. doubling of the themal note.

Var 2. - Taorluath;

Var 2.doubling, - taorluath doubling.

'Creanluidh' (DMcD) which is equivalent to a 'fosgailte' in modern performance,

Creanluidh doubling -which is a 'standard' present day crunluath ,

Trebling of Creanluidh- which is equivalent to the modern 'a mach' movement.

For comparison with the rhythms of the fiddle version, let the above be regarded as seven variations. The PMcD variation is numbered on the left

the *ùrlar* is identical in form and almost identical in melody. The setting represents a less restricted melodic scansion, even within the pipe register, and the succeeding variations are less restricted to what might be perceived as the themal notes of the *ùrlar*. The first two phrases, appear as follows:

Ex 11



The striking feature of this text concerns not only how he notated the cadence runs, but also where he placed them on the score. Just as in DMcD they are shown as demi-semiquavers with no rests on any of the constituent notes. He also notated them in a manner which shows that they represent decorations to the themal notes of the tune and are therefore not to be accented. He therefore placed them before the bar line, as anacruses, implying that the stress occurs on the following themal note at the beginning of the bar. It is interesting that, although PMcD obtained this setting from a Lochaber piper, which means that it probably represented a different source from DMcD, the setting is nevertheless similar to DMcD's. The cadence runs decorate the same notes in most cases. It does not seem that DMcD was influenced by PMcD's notation style in his own collection. If he had studied PMcD's notation and had

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and the equivalent DMcD variation on the right. These proceed in the following order:

1st: Var 2 doubling; ie. Taorluath a mach.

2nd: Var 1 siubhal;

3rd: Var 1 dithis;

4th: Var 2. taorluath singling with undotted quaver, two semiquaver motifs;

5th: taorluath, melodically different with 6/8 rhythm ie. dotted quaver;

6th: crunluath singling

The equivalent rhythm of DMcD's 'creanluidh' trebling is not identified in PMcD. This is not surprising, as it becomes more technically demanding on the fiddle. Instead of three crunluath variations of DMcD, PMcD has just the one. It is compensated for by the melodically different kind of taorluath immediately before and the rhythmic differentiation between three taorluath movements. If he notated it exactly as he stated (from the piper's actual performance) then the position of the taorluath trebling after the *ùrlar* is intriguing. It does not follow the strict melodic line of modern pibroch performance either.



chosen to notate cadences in PMcD's style it is possible that Angus MacKay, influenced by DMcD, may have avoided his own accentuation of the E of the cadences at the expense of the melodic line of the tune. It seems a little unusual that DMcD did not see the advantage of PMcD's notation, even if the latter was not notating strictly for pipes but for fiddle and other instruments.

#### FIDDLE VERSION AND SONG: IMPLICATIONS.

It would initially seem that the presence of the numerous cadences in both the DMcD and PMcD *ùrlar* is what sets this tune apart from the brisker version implied by the existence of the song words. The song words as sung to the pibroch text without cadences do not allow much freedom for vocal embellishments because of what appears to be a somewhat regular rhythmic metre. DMcD and PMcD's notation of the cadences as demisemiquaver flourishes, followed by the stressed first notes of the following motifs, creates a very rhythmic effect. It should also clearly identify, for the listener, the notes which are decorative as opposed to those which are not. The song maker in an oral tradition would therefore have no difficulty in identifying the melody line and its use. The cadence runs are very sparse in all the variations in both DMcD and PMcD and some of the song text, as has been observed, can be more closely modelled on these than with the *ùrlar*. Where they do appear, they act as introductions at the beginning of the variations. Occasionally, they occur in other places in the text, but in what appears to be in fairly random positions in PMcD. This 'randomness' is probably one musician's prerogative. } edit

Both the fiddle and the pipe versions recommend a very slow tempo but from the evidence of the song versions two different tempos <sup>are appropriate</sup> seem to exist, one fairly brisk and the other slow. This is not surprising and in a healthy oral tradition there was probably a range of tempos possibly encompassing some different versions. The numerous cadences in the *ùrlar* and the tempo advice suggests that a slowing down had occurred <sup>by</sup> by 1800. Could it be that the influences of the drawing room type of genre which prevailed from the early 1700's<sup>8</sup> onwards had already been felt at least in the tempos || results.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson (1984: 34)



of tunes? Did the Lochaber piper play it at this speed or was the slow tempo on the advice of the notators only? Dalyell (1849: 101) commenting on three of the most popular tunes of the early nineteenth century competitions mentions: 'Glass Mheur which a Lowlander may not venture to interpret'<sup>9</sup> What he meant by this comment is not very clear and one cannot be sure of whether he was influenced by the traditions about the tune and its enigmatic title, its actual performance style or the melodic and rhythmical features of the tune, independent of any historical preconceptions. I suspect he was also affected by the mystique associated with the tune which suggested it was a difficult piece. Footnote

The title of the song and the traditions associated with the tune do not suggest lamentation and even if it were a lament, there would be no reason to play it very slowly and solemnly. The lament becoming especially slow is probably one of the greatest influences of the drawing room genre mentioned above, although research is required in this area before one can draw any conclusions. Some of the main characteristics of lamentation are discussed in the case study of MacIntosh's Lament. [CS]

There is a feature of PMcD's version which relates it once again to the song version, which in turn specifically relates to form and the refrain-verse style. Like the song, which returns to the 'Fonn' after every verse, PMcD's version returns to the *ùrlar*. This occurs after every variation. It would be difficult to perform this tune very slowly, rather like modern performance style, and to return to the *ùrlar* after every variation. DMcD in notating for pipers is probably being more pragmatic, given his advice on a slow tempo, and returns to the *ùrlar* only after Var 1 doubling and the taorluath doubling.

There is another set of words (SH: 23/4/1891), the text of which was stated to be 'the correct words of A'Ghlas Mheur' by the contributor.<sup>10</sup> But they clearly are not the correct words, for the texts comprise a number of

Footnote  
note  
all

<sup>9</sup> The other two tunes were Prince's Salute and Grim Donald's Sweetheart.

<sup>10</sup> The collector was Alasdair Carmichael {Carmina Gadelica} who stated that the old man from whom he had collected the song had emphasised that they were the correct words to the song: 'Fhuair mi na rannan a leanas, anns 'an Ard Albannach (aireamh Lunnasdal 1881), agus bha e air a radh an sin leis an deagh sgoilear Mr Alasdair Carmichael gu'n d'fhuair an sean duine, bho'n d'fhuair e na focail so gu'n robh annta ceart-fhocail na Glais-mheur.' Alexander



identifiable songs,<sup>11</sup> the metre and rhythm of which are unsuited to what pipers identify with A'Ghlas Mheur.

There are other fragments which lay claim to A'Ghlas Mheur<sup>12</sup>

An interesting social feature of this tune is that it was used in a Highland regiment of the eighteenth century as a reveille. Murray (1975: 11) doubted its suitability on the assumption that the style of performance was similar to today's. However, with the evidence just presented and in view of the short melodic motifs which this tune contains, I consider that it was, on the contrary, a suitable tune for this purpose. Furthermore, with regard to social setting, the nature of the song words and the context in which this tune was used, there is further internal evidence which links it with the Highland soldiers.<sup>13</sup> The tenth and eleventh verses especially relate this song to the soldiers' lot. These are as follows:

<sup>11</sup> The song I have identified has fragments of: 1. Crodh Chailein. 2. Tha bò dhubh agam. 3. Na Féidh am Bràighe Uige. There also appears to be several other texts here: 4. O ho nigh'nn donn. 5. Ho ro mo nighean Chagair 6. Ho mo lur deurach dubh...an téid thu 'Bhraigh Lochaidh an diugh.

<sup>12</sup> Scottish Highlander 30 April 1891 has: 'it would appear that the following was either the *Deuchainn Ghleusda* or the wording in the *tus-cheol* of the Glas mheur: *Glas-mheur, Glas-mheur, Glas-mheur gu h-ullamh, Tha ceol gu leor Ann am meoir an duine.*' This is more likely to be part of the storyline of many of the traditions which have been handed down concerning this tune.

<sup>13</sup> D.C. MacPherson (Abrach) in An Gàidheal (May 1874) gives one tradition behind the tune linking it to 'Fear Bhaosdail' the chief of Clan Ranald MacDonald in South Uist, Colin MacDonald, who turned against Catholicism and was remembered as 'fear a'bhata bhuidhe' (the man of the yellow stick) because of his forceful beatings against those who would not reject the Catholic faith. Ronald MacDonald of Morar (Raonaidh MacAilean Oig) on hearing this sailed to Uist and calling on the minister left him very drunk to face his congregation. The following day he (then) warned Boisdale that he should change his ways or else 'dheanadh e pasgadh-na-pìoba air' (he would fold him up like a set of pipes) - which appears to have been a commonly used expression by the Morar piper. On this occasion the pibroch with the accompanying words was composed. It is possible that some of the verses associated with this event are in this song which has later been adapted by soldiers. For example, the last three verses may refer to the above event. See also TGS I XXXVII p. 56 Neil Rankin Morrison 'Clann Duiligh: Pìobairean Chloinn Ghill-Eathain' ~~for another tradition on how the tune was named.~~ See also TGS I XLVI (1970: 278) for another tradition on how Glas-Mheur was composed.

Olaidh sinn ar boineidean,  
Ged lomadh air na maolaibh.

Ol air an etc.

[We'll drink our bonnets/ even if it leaves our heads bare]

Olaidh sinn na gartana,  
Th'air na casan caola.

Ol air etc.

[We'll drink the garters/that are on the thin legs]

One style of playing the *ùrlar* in light of this research can be heard on audio.

→ Comment here on other provenances - footnote 13,  
CONCLUSIONS

The evidence presented shows that the song represents a burlesque imitation of the pibroch idiom. The performance style of the song version which was identified by text alone was probably fairly animated and I suggest that the pibroch performance was similarly animated in style. The other, recorded, song version supports the conclusion that there ~~was~~ were several versions and tempos in the song tradition, which was probably as valid in the pibroch tradition although not as diverse. Despite the slow tempo of the song recording, it is rhythmic and in stark contrast to present day performance style, which is usually also very slow but unfortunately relatively arrhythmic. A' Ghlas Mheur's use as a reveille probably represents its most animated form with the settings by PMcD and DMcD representing slower versions. The tune as played today therefore represents a slowed down version of what was once a popular animated piece of music.

The use of  
A' Ghlas  
Mheur