

# Society Publications: Forward Programmes

Roderick D. Cannon

Piobaireachd Society Conference

Saturday, 17 March 2007

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The present position
- 3 Short-term plans
  - 3.1 Revision of Book 1 (and 2?)
  - 3.2 Books 3-15
  - 3.3 D. MacDonald vol 2
- 4 Medium-term proposals
  - 4.1 Book 16?
  - 4.2 The Campbell Canntaireachd
- 5 The role of an editor
- 6 The role of the Piobaireachd Society
- 7 A look ahead

## 1 Introduction

I've called this talk "Forward Programmes" in the plural for two reasons. Firstly because it concerns the past and the present, and secondly because when we look to the future there will be choices to be made. It's certainly not for me to dictate what should happen.

Also – a disclaimer. I am not here as a spokesman for anyone but myself. I'm going to express opinions. I hope I can persuade you that they are sensible, but still they are only my opinions and not necessarily anyone else's.

From time to time, this Conference has paused to take stock of the Society and its role in the wider world of piping. In fact, our very first conference, in 1972 spent more time on polices than on historical or strictly musical matters. Here are the titles of some of the talks, down the years:

- 1972 Has the time arrived for Society publications to be revised? (A. G. Kenneth and others)
- 1973 Unpublished tunes in the Campbell canntaireachd MS (A. G. Kenneth)
- 1977 The Emendation of Piobaireachd
- 1982 What kind of Piobaireachd Society do we want? (J. A. MacLellan and others)
- 1988 The musical interpretation [and notation] of Piobaireachd (J. MacIntosh)
- 1996 Society Publications, the Forward Programme (R. D. Cannon)
- 2002 The scoring of Ceol Mor (D. B. MacNeill)

I won't attempt to review all these contributions here, but the titles and the names of participants will give an idea of the range of views that have been expressed.

And here is my take on what the Society has accomplished, over a rather longer time-scale. I'm only looking at one aspect, that of broadening the repertoire by encouraging pipers to experiment with unfamiliar tunes:

- 1903 Set Tunes in competitions
- 1903 Society Competitions
- 1925 Variant settings (for pipers of higher intelligence!)
- 1925 Unknown tunes
- 1932 Tunes from unknown sources
- 1932 Editorial additions to old settings
- 1990 Tunes from non-bagpipe sources (in Book 15)
- 1994 Full texts of original sources

As the summary shows, the Society began with the novel concept of Set Tunes, promoted at first through Society competitions. The Set Tune idea has stood the test of time, the Society competitions have not. When the second series of books was started in 1925 the novelty was to give quite rich selections of alternative versions. Then, very gradually, came tunes from the Campbell Canntaireachd, and others like The Union and the Viscount of Dundee, which at that time were also virtually unknown. The Big Spree and the Little Spree were popularised by extending them with variations arranged by the editors themselves. All these things have entered the mainstream. To what extent even newer knowledge will also enter the mainstream, remains to be seen. But one thing is encouraging: our edition of Joseph MacDonald is already sold out, so it seems that the interest is there at least. No doubt there have always been different opinions on what we should do and how we should do it, but the point I want to bring out here is that from time to time we have struck out and done something that's been new for the piping world: perhaps ahead of its time, but something which has proved its worth in the long run.

## **2. The present position**

We have about ten works currently have on sale – 25 if we count Books 1-15 as separate items. And an increasing number of reference works available free of charge on the website – but I won't say any more about that here as I think John Dow is going to give a presentation later on.

As regards Books 1-15, here are two graphs which chart the development of the series over the years:

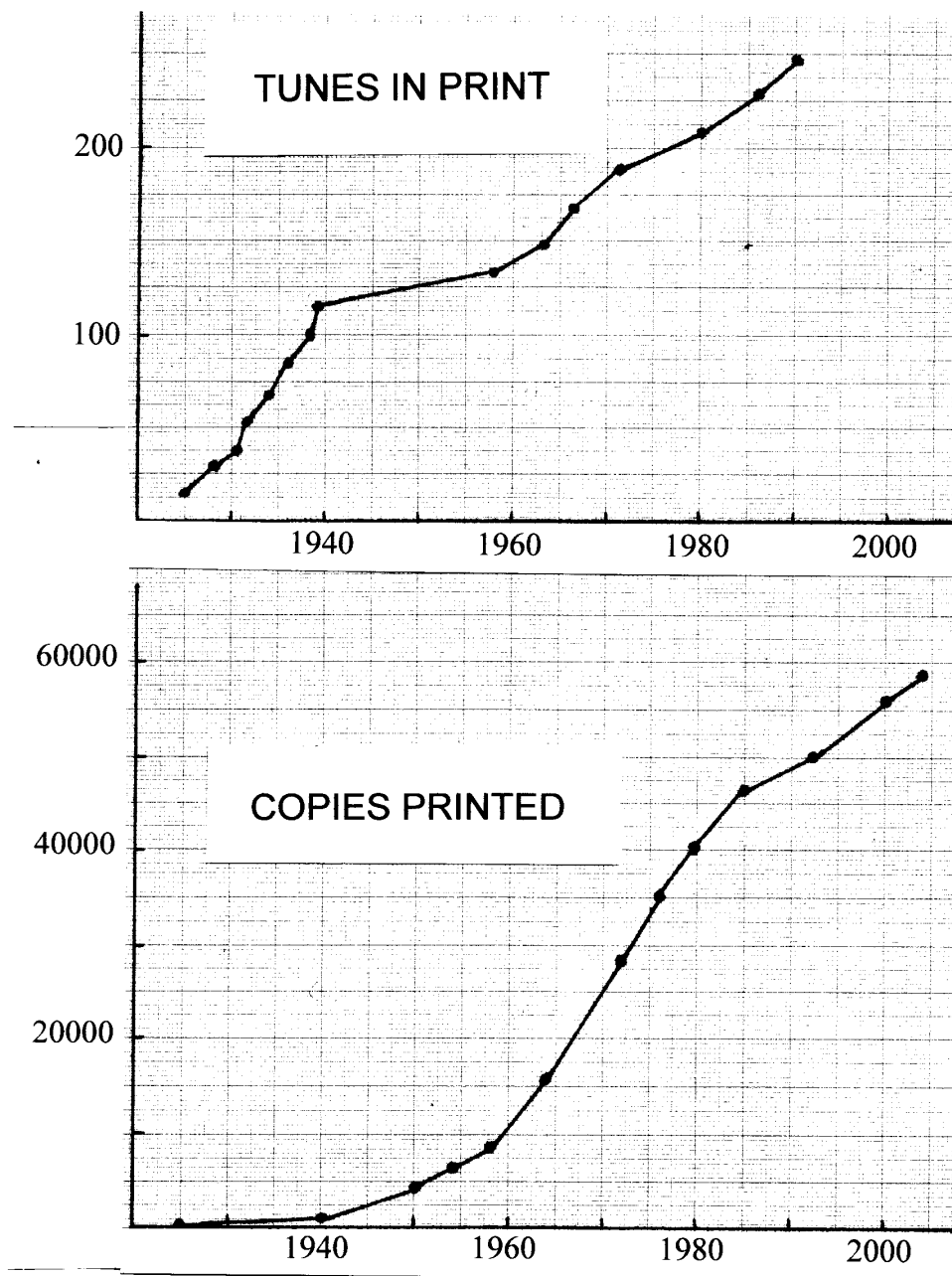


Figure 1.

Progress of the Piobaireachd Society series, Books 1-15, from 1925. Cumulative total number of tunes in print, and cumulative total number of copies of books printed.

The upper part of this Figure shows the growth in the total number of tunes printed. We see the amazing productivity in the era of Rothiemurchus and Kilberry, before the

second world war, and the equal though more protracted increase during the editorship of Archie Kenneth from 1964 to 1989. It's remarkable, as Kilberry himself said in 1961, that as time has gone on the work of publishing has got harder and slower instead of easier and quicker. The lower part of Figure 1 shows the number of copies printed over the years. Two things are very obvious – a surge in sales through the 1970s, and after that, what looks for the moment like a steady state.

These figures tell something else I think. We have always sold far more books to non-members than to members of the Society. My calculation is very rough but goes as follows. Over the last ten years or so sales have held steady at about 600 copies per year. The number of new members joining the Society has fluctuated a bit, and also tended to increase, but in the same period it has averaged fifteen per year. If every new member bought every book, that would still only account for 225 books per year whereas the actual sale is two or three times that. In the very earliest years it was also noted that non-members accounted for most sales, and more recently, the sale of 750 copies of Joseph MacDonald in a period of about 10 years perhaps tells us the same thing. These calculations are very rough, and a more careful investigation might be interesting. Meanwhile they make the point that what we do is not only ahead of its time, it is also done for the benefit of the wider world of piping and not just for a closed circle.

The different thing which we started in 1994 was to publish original sources in their entirety. The idea of doing this was not new. In fact it had been the ideal since the beginning of the century, and by the 1970s there was a positive fashion for reprinting earlier published books. But still there were no facsimiles of manuscripts until we made a start. Here is a diagram showing the major old sources of piobaireachd and

how they relate to each other:

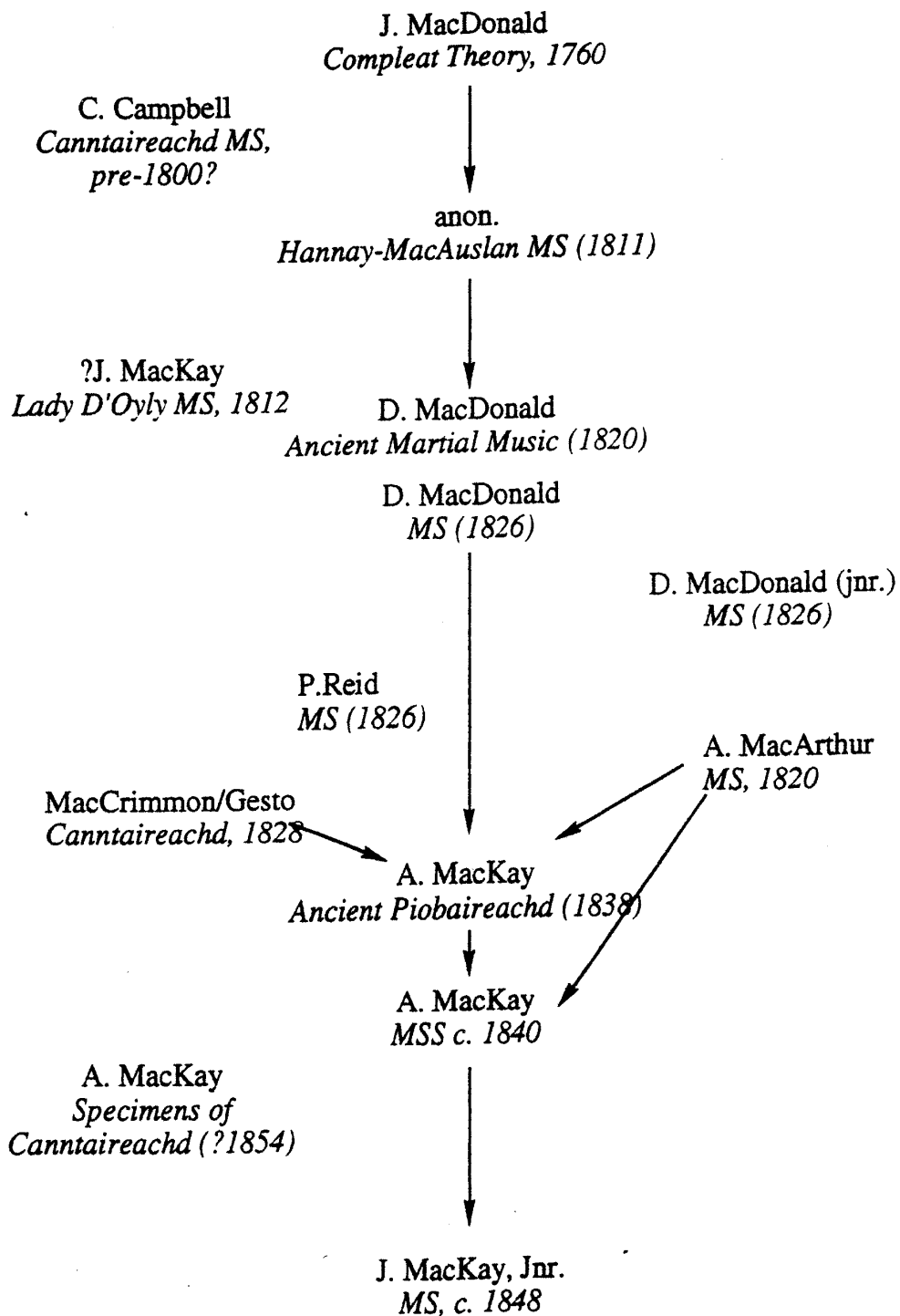


Figure 2.

Sources of piobaireachd, and relationships between them. The arrows show how some books and MSS are believed to have been used by the compilers of later ones.

This diagram may help us to gauge the progress that has been made, by others as well as ourselves. A facsimile of Joseph MacDonald's MS appeared in our published edition, and a facsimile of the MacArthur-MacGregor manuscript is in the edition prepared by Andrew Wright and Frans Buisman and published by the John MacFadyen Trust. For our latest book, Donald MacDonald volume 1, the facsimiles are on our website. Meanwhile a facsimile of Donald MacDonald's manuscript has been published on the internet, by Ross Anderson, and the Campbell canntaireachd is set to follow, from Barnaby Brown. Things are happening rapidly now and I hope it won't be long before the other main sources appear as well: Peter Reid, MacLeod of Gesto, Donald MacDonald junior, Angus MacKay and John MacKay.

### **3. Short-term Plans**

I'd now like to deal with some of the things we are doing which were decided a good while ago, and which I hope are relatively uncontroversial.

#### **3.1 Revision of Book 1**

Book 1 is different from all the others because it includes a preface and a list of sources, both now well out of date. Also for a long time it has been criticised for its inclusion of full-length translations of the tunes into Campbell canntaireachd. The revision will have a new preface and no canntaireachd translations, and this will free up space for new material, of which a good deal has accumulated since 1925. It should also be possible to rearrange things so that every tune appears on the left hand page with editorial notes on the right, something which has also been strongly recommended. When all this is done the question will arise, do we do the same with Book 2, which also has canntaireachd translations? Perhaps we should, but after that – so I believe – the process should stop. The whole series is really a monument to its time. It still serves its original purposes quite well and the judgement supported by the Music Committee so far is that further wholesale revision would be too costly in time and effort.

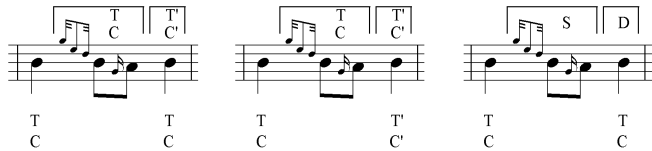
### 3.2 Books 3-15

These will continue in print for the foreseeable future. That means that stocks will be maintained and changes will be slight. There are in fact some inconsistencies in our notation and from time to time it is suggested that these should be tidied up. Some of them are shown here:

Two ways of writing 1st and 2nd time



Three ways of writing singlings and doublings



Two ways of writing *hiodarid hiodarem*



We also, in the earlier days, tried different ways of writing grace notes:





These differences seem to be due to the practices of different editors. One which is hardly noticed now is the use of a different-sized head for the “cadence-E”. (I can’t show it correctly here because it should middle-sized and my music writing software only allows two sizes of head, large and small). I don’t think anyone had done it before, but I think it had some merit. Also, as you see, in the first two books J. P. Grant used to separate off the cadence E from the gracenotes which follow. Did he mean anything particular by this? I suspect that he had been taught to play the D gracenote after the E somewhat longer than the high G gracenote, but if so, that’s a distinction we have lost in the notation. You also see here some cases of notes being written sometimes with small heads and sometimes with large. That’s a very big issue when we try to play from older books and MSS and it’s still an issue today.

Finally another significant change of policy. In the earlier books, time signatures are used and care has been taken to make sure that the note lengths in each bar add up to the conventional total, four crotchets in common time, six quavers in 6/8, etc.

Kilberry at least didn’t like this but he explained once why he had gone along with it. In a letter to J. P. Grant in 1949 he wrote

As regards time signatures... the wisest advice I had was from you, was to leave them out. I did not do so because I did not want to be accused by cranks (who might influence pipers) of being yet another eccentric trying to foist new ideas and theories of his own, (see Piob. Soc. Conference, 2000, p. 7).

The price he paid for conventional note lengths was that he had to put pause marks over a great many notes. By now we find him being accused, not of eccentricity but of unmusicality and general ignorance of the ways of playing piobaireachd. Archie Kenneth, in Books 11 onward, took a radically different approach. He often omitted time signatures and simply wrote all the notes the length he thought they should be.

We see all this in the different ways of writing taorluath singlings:

The image shows four musical staves, each with a sequence of notes and 'T' symbols below them. The first staff is in 2/4 time, the second in 6/8 time, the third in a mixed time signature (8+1 over 8), and the fourth in 8/8 time. The notes are: a dotted quarter note, an eighth note, a dotted quarter note, an eighth note, a dotted quarter note, and an eighth note.

The commonest way, in line 1 here, is 2/4 time, with the T symbol standing for the taorluath as shown at the left, i.e. dotted quaver plus semiquaver. Just occasionally, 6/8 time is preferred, as in line 2. The way shown in line 3 is Archie Kenneth's, with mainly crotchet-length phrases and longer phrases for the phrase endings. That's not too hard to read and the only criticism that a conventionally trained musician would make would be that the bar which has extra length should also have its own time signature. The modern way of doing that is to write a mixed-time signature, in this case (8+1) over 8. That draws attention to the effect and reassures us that it's not just a misprint. But in other cases not shown here I do think that Archie went off the rails. He would write a passage as in line 3 and call it a quotation from Angus MacKay's manuscript, when it is not so in fact. No doubt Archie thought his notation was musically better than Angus's, but I believe he should have left the text as it was and added his improvements in an editorial comment.

My own view of all this is that you just can't win. Whatever an editor does, someone is going to find it misleading, and the safest course is to keep the notation simple and explain the more subtle things additionally in words. Teachers using the Society books need to explain them, and different teachers can take different views. The key thing, I suggest, is to make sure that whatever symbols are used, they are explained in the book itself, not just taken as common knowledge. After all, in science textbooks, it is quite normal for one author to write  $x$  to stand for some particular thing, while

another author writes *y* for the same thing. All that matters is to define the term when it arises. Sorry if that makes me sound like a teacher.

So to sum up, here is what we are planning to do with the rest of the Books as they come up for reprinting.

1. Add a short preface to cover notational points such as mentioned above.
2. Replace the key to the Campbell canntaireachd with a more up-to-date version, as already printed in Book 12.
3. Add a very few footnotes to the editorial notes, e.g to mention a new source like the Kintarbert MS.
4. Leave the music on the left hand page strictly alone, except to correct an actual misprint.

### 3.3 Donald MacDonald, Volume 2.

Volume 1, just published, is an edition of Donald MacDonald's printed book, which first appeared in 1820. Volume 2 is his manuscript, which he himself had wanted to publish but never did. With volume 1 out of the way my firm intention is to go on and complete volume 2. Some things seem to be pre-determined – page-size, general design and layout. It will have 50 tunes instead of 23. Most tunes will fit on to one page, and the editorial commentaries can go on a facing page. It will not need such lengthy discussions on notation and style, because much of that has been covered in volume 1. Provided readers of volume 2 are prepared to buy volume 1 as well, we can take a lot of that as read. And we do not need a facsimile of the manuscript, as that has already been put on the web by Ross Anderson. So taken all round, Donald MacDonald's volume 2 looks like more content with less labour.

There are still issues however. One is that the style of music in the manuscript seems different to some extent from that in the earlier book. It is simpler in many tunes. Did MacDonald really modify his own playing style? Did he collect more tunes, from players who were trained in other schools? Or was he being diplomatic and writing in such a way that different people could play from the same score in different ways? These are interesting questions but there are no easy answers.

The other issue of course is cost. I suppose it will cost about the same as volume 1 (apart from inflation). If it takes about three years to produce, we can hope to have recouped a fair amount of the cost of Vol 1, so we shall have to watch the sales carefully. But it is possible that we will have to seek financial support for Volume 2, and that will be a matter for the General Committee – assuming of course that the Society supports the work in the first place.

#### **4. Medium-term Proposals**

In this heading I am placing ideas and projects which have either not yet been started (officially), or which have been considered but not yet decided.

##### 4.1 Book 16?

When Book 15 was published it was firmly announced that it would be the last. But several people have had other thoughts on that. When we were up to Book 12, John MacLellan said he thought there was material for another four books, and that would bring us to sixteen. More recently I was asked to look at this and I produced a preliminary draft of 30 tunes, out of which perhaps 20 could be selected. The draft was passed round among members of the Music Committee but it did not attract enough enthusiasm to make us feel confident in going ahead. Still, it might be of interest to see the list:

- 1 Brian O’Duff’s Lament
- 2 MacDonald of Glengarry’s Lament
- 3 Inverness
- 4 White Wedder’s Black Tail
- 5 MacLeod of Tallisker’s Lament
- 6 The Frisky Lover
- 7 Katherine’s Salute
- 8 The Blue Ribbon (Mull) *or* Tune of Strife

- 9 The Comely Tune
- 10 The Red Ribbon *and* Sinclair's March
- 11 Kingerloch's March
- 12 MacNeill's March
- 13 Failte na Misge
- 14 MacIver's March
- 15 Cha till mi tuille *and* Cha till MacCruimein
- 16 Salute to Inverary *and* March of the Lord of Coll *and two others*
- 17 Piobaireachd Aon Cnochán *and* Fuinachair
- 18 A' Chnocaireachd
- 19 Nameless (A. MacKay I, 105)
- 20 Abercairney's Lament
- 21 Chehotrao ho dro
- 22 Croan air Euan
- 23 Evan aka char fhein mi shudda
- 24 The Waking of the Bridegroom
- 25 A Prelude
- 26 "One of the Cragich" (CC I 52)
- 27 Cluny MacPherson's Salute
- 28 Lord Berisdale's Salute
- 29 Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod's Lament
- 30 Hail to my Country

There is a considerable mix here. There are a few big tunes, found in several manuscripts, which clearly fall in line with the classics already dealt with in the earlier books. There are still a few more known only in the Campbell canntaireachd but which with discreet editing can be brought into the modern (or mainstream) style. There are some very attractive short tunes – they might never be suitable for competition but they were composed in the heyday of piobaireachd and some pipers at least felt them worth handing down. In any case, competition is not the only reason for playing a piobaireachd, nor for including it in a book. Finally there are some relatively modern works, by known composers in the Victorian era. No later ones though, rightly or wrongly.

This is what I might call Plan A for Book 16, and so far it hasn't gained massive support. But I also have a Plan B, which is purely an idea and I must stress that

neither Plan A nor Plan B is any part of the Music Committee's current policy. Plan B is to have a book which would contain a mix, roughly half and half, of tunes from the list above, and tunes which have already been published in earlier books, but now in alternative settings. These would be settings which were described in the editorial notes but not printed in staff notation. In the earliest days it was decided adopt just one main setting of every tune and limit all the others to descriptions in the editorial notes. But eventually this proved unworkable and so we had Battle of Auldearn Nos 1 and 2, Park Piobaireachd Nos 1 and 2, and a few others. I would like to see The Old Woman's Lullaby No 2, Queen Anne's Lament no 2, and others, brought to light in staff notation, and if that could be done I think they would eventually be played. Here is a list of some tunes which could be treated in that way:

- 1 The Old Woman's Lullaby
- 2 Lament for Donald of Laggan
- 3 Lament for Queen Anne
- 4 Lament for the Union
- 5 Lament for Red Hector of the Battles
- 6 Lament for Colin MacRae of Inverinate
- 7 In Praise of Morag
- 8 Lament for Colin Roy MacKenzie
- 9 War or Peace
- 10 The Stewarts White Banner
- 11 The Piper's Warning to his Master
- 12 MacLeod's Controversy

#### 4.2 The Campbell Canntaireachd.

This is our oldest and largest source of piobaireachd, 168 tunes dated at least in part to 1797. As I said earlier the possibility of publishing it in full was considered several times. It was only rejected on grounds of cost. I don't know what form the publication would have taken if it had gone ahead. What actually happened was that tunes from the manuscript were deciphered one by one, and gradually included in the Society's

Books. The editors confessed to “some anxiety” about doing this because “we have not yet got sufficient information on many points” (Piob. Soc. Book 1, p. iv). What those points were they didn’t say but the obvious ones are that timings of notes are not specified as they would be in staff notation, and certain sorts of ornamental notes, notably “cadence-E”, are rarely shown. Were they just not played by the writer, or were they optional, or were they just so obvious that they didn’t need to be written down? The only general conclusion that was that the style of gracenoting “perhaps approximates more to that of Donald MacDonald than to that of Angus MacKay” (Book 4, p. 125).

What are we to do now? Is Barnaby’s facsimile all that we need? It is no doubt possible to learn to read the canntaireachd and play directly from it. Does it need editing? My personal view, and I do mean personal, is that editing is indeed required, and that without it the music will never get into the domain of performance. Other people will perhaps not agree with this and I hope they will come forward with their sides of the argument. But if we go with my idea for a moment, I suggest that any edition needs to fulfil the following criteria:

1. It must be complete, and faithful to the text. The reader must be able to see easily what the author originally wrote.
2. Difficulties must be pointed out, and where possible, solved. I mean localised difficulties like words hard to read, apparent clerical errors and places where the author seems to have changed his mind partway through the work.
3. Music must use the usual five-line stave and be set out so it can be sight-read.
4. Changes by the editor must be clearly indicated every time they occur.

Having said all this, there will be still be editorial decisions to make. Time signatures? How many grace notes in a crunluath? Do we time a Siubhal ‘up’ or ‘down’? For most of these I see no alternative but to make a judgement, but in that case to say as emphatically as possible that it is a judgement, and that other alternatives exist.

Here is one possibility to consider. The following are the first few vocables of the tune that Campbell calls “Sutherland’s March” (we also know it as “The Bicker”, in

Piobaireachd Society Book 11). Below them is the staff notation in our next oldest source, Donald MacDonald's manuscript. Among the more obvious differences are the cadences or run-downs, with the D grace note included here but not played today, and the movement corresponding to *hiharin* which has caused so much trouble in the last generation:

### Campbell canntaireachd

Hindro hindro hihamhin hiodin hindro hihamto hiharin hiharin

### D. MacDonald (1826)



### Experimental notation



The last line will look very odd. I've borrowed some of the notation from Frans Buisman. Frans reduced all the throws to the single symbol 'dr', which he obviously took from the vocables 'dro' and 'dre'. He put in cadence E's but he reduced them to a simple open circle on the E line. I think he's expressing a view that they should go in. He is certainly expressing a view that *if* they go in, they are played with the E long, and he is, I think, being completely non-committal about whether and how to play the following grace note D. This is perhaps not ideal, because in *hihamhin* and *hihamto* the letter a in the middle surely represents the note D, which we have in Donald MacDonald but not in the MacKay school of playing. I am inclined to think that the a in *hiharin* is also a D. There are many points of view here and all I'm saying for the moment is that I'm looking for a symbol which can be read easily without imposing these points of view on the player.

So as regards the Campbell canntaireachd, I think there are some easy problems and some hard ones. Fortunately it's a good way down the line yet, and who knows, perhaps the whole thing will be taken up by someone else.



## 5. The role of an Editor

These thoughts lead on to the question of what, in any case, an editor should be doing. First I'd like to come at this by showing some of the problems that came up in the recent edition of Donald MacDonald, and after that I'll try to broaden it out.

Here is beginning of the Lament for the Duke of Hamilton, doubling of Variation 1, as first published in 1820:



In the sixth bar the pointing of the notes B is long-short instead of short-long. There's not much doubt that this is wrong because the phrase occurs repeatedly and everywhere else it's short-long. In fact bar 6 was never corrected, but in the revised edition of 1822 another error occurred in the next bar, where two low A's which were also long-short, were altered to short-long:



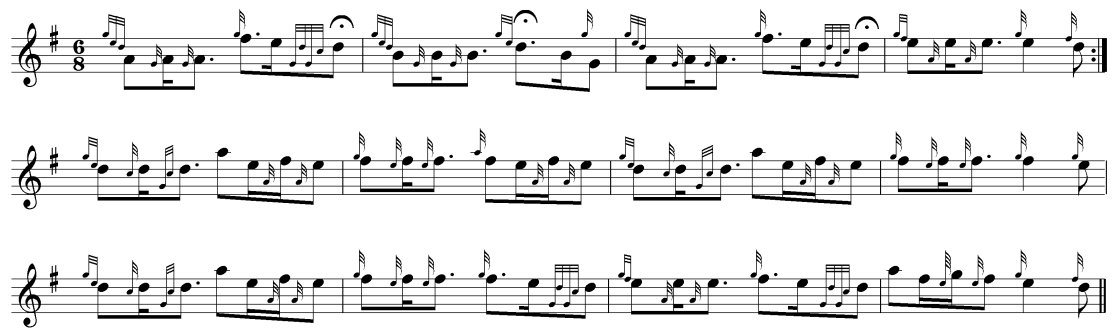
It's easy to see what happened – MacDonald spotted the mistake, told the engraver to put it right, but didn't stand there to see it done. The engraver went away and changed the pointing, but unfortunately changed the wrong notes. In our new edition we have gone for what we feel sure MacDonald really wanted:



The error introduced in 1822 is a sort of corroboration of the amendment that was really needed.

I doubt if any one would seriously object to these amendments but notice in passing that in the 1822 version the beat on A in the third bar could actually be read in another way. The first low A is short, and today of course it's very short indeed. Is this bar right and all the other beats on A wrong? I think not, or rather, because I'm wary of the words 'right' and 'wrong', I think this bar is unintentional and the others intentional. The simplest argument is, if this change was intentional, why was it not made anywhere else? I think it would be wrong to seize on this one exception. More significant to my mind is that later on, in his manuscript, MacDonald did occasionally write the beat on low A in the short-long way. But when he did it he did it throughout a whole tune, while retaining long-short in other tunes, and an unpointed notation in still others. All that is another story.

Now a rather different case. This is the ground of *Bodaich nam Briogais*, The Carles with the Breeks, and the point at issue is the small note preceding F in the middle of bar 2 of the second line:



The small note is high A, not high G as we might expect. It's been put to me that this is a simple misprint and should be amended as follows:



But I have a problem with that. If it's an error someone has not just put the note too high up, but has also written or engraved a ledger line across it. That's more than just a slip of the pen, it's two errors in the same place. All the old editions agree, but I don't put too much stress on that. After 1822 MacDonald seems to have had no further control over the music and subsequent changes are simply repair jobs where plates got damaged. The reason I accept the high A is a musical one, based on a general view of MacDonald's style. In line 2 of the tune, high A features quite strongly as a melody note, and MacDonald quite regularly introduces gracenotes which repeat the strong notes of the melody. So I read and play this note with melodic character, echoing the high A of the previous bar.

So why not go ahead and write it as a full note? Why leave it in the editorial notes, which is what we have done? The reason is that I think we can see what MacDonald was up to. Here are two ways of writing the high A in full. If you accept the constraints of staff notation in the way that everyone in 1820 did, the time for the high A has to be taken off the time of some other note. Take it off the preceding note and you get this:



Take it off the following note and you get this:



In the first way the high A is before the beat, in the second way it's on the beat. What if there isn't a beat in the simple left-right-left-right marching sense? Suppose the high A just adds some extra time without taking it from somewhere else. Then you might get something like this



I suggest that this is a problem which did not arise until the music came to be put down on paper. I expect that when MacDonald was teaching a pupil he would simply sing or play the passage, and the pupil would sing or play along with him until he got

it right. So that's our excuse for leaving the notation as MacDonald left it, and just pointing it out on the page, for pipers to interpret as they think best.

My last example is again Lament for the Duke of Hamilton, Variation 2. Here it is as now printed by us:

### Lament for the Duke of Hamilton, D. MacDonald (1820)

#### IV Var 2. *Pointed.*

*Play 3 times*

#### V Var 2 Doubling. *Lively.*

*Play 3 times*

There are many interesting things here, too many to discuss now, but the one I want to point out is the notation in bars 1-4 of the doubling. This is a Siubhal variation, mainly couplets in 2/4 time, but in bars 3 and 4 MacDonald beams the notes together in groups of four, not two. If you want to be pedantic, he's gone into 1/2 time instead of 2/4. Why has he done this? He doesn't say but in these bars the gracenotes are also different, in fact the sequence of them is the same as in a taorluath. Perhaps it was in fact played as a taorluath, with the second low A very short. (I'm not going into the question of whether the second low A should have been omitted altogether). Here are two ways in which the second low A could be written short:



I'm also not going into the question of which if either of these is better. All I'm saying is that MacDonald is giving us a clue that somehow the timing of the music changes at this point. As I see it, the job of the editor is to point these things out, and leave it to musicians to put them into practice.

Now look at this one – Kinlochmoidart's Lament as printed by Angus MacKay, the present Piobaireachd Society:

A. MacKay MS, vol 1, p 173



Piob Soc Book 6, p 187 (from A. Cameron)



and now as printed by Roddie Ross and Seumas MacNeill:

## Binneas is Borerraig, Book 3, p 30



## S. MacNeill (1968) p 75

Four staves of musical notation for the piece 'S. MacNeill (1968) p 75'. The notation is written in a single system with four staves. The first two staves are in 6/8 time, the third staff is in 3/4 time, and the fourth staff is in 3/4 time. The music consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and a final double bar line. The word 'etc' is written at the end of the fourth staff.

The later notations are evidently closer to what is generally played today. Evidently better, we might say. Certainly they are full of details which a learner could easily miss. Is this what we should be doing? I'll come to that question in a moment.

## 6. The Role of the Piobaireachd Society

I'm talking here only about our role as publishers. This is covered by our Rules 2 (b) and 2 (c), the objects being

- (b) To collect Piobaireachd MSS, to record their history, to publish tunes, correcting those already in print which are found to be wrong, and to form a library of material whether written, printed or recorded in any other form, for the dissemination of pipe music.
- (c) To aid in the general advancement and diffusion of knowledge of the ancient Highland piobaireachd.

Now I'll put my own gloss on that by listing some of the things which we do and don't do. Under the DO list I have:

Performing texts with alternatives	Books 1-15
Performing texts, from the above	Kilberry Book
New compositions	20th Century collection
Editions of complete sources	J. MacDonald, D. MacDonald
Background information	Sidelights, General Introduction
Finding aids	indexes, bibliographies, catalogues

and of course there much more still to do under these headings, which is what this talk is mainly about. My DON'T DO list is perhaps less obvious, or at least it needs discussion:

1. We don't teach. We have certainly supported instructors in the past, but we don't as a Society give lessons or try to tell others how to do so. There are teachers all over the world, and institutions like the College of Piping and the Piping Centre, and we don't compete with them.
2. We don't publish teaching manuals. Throughout our history there have been other such works in print, from David Glen's and Donald MacPhee's books already published before 1900, to more recent ones by John MacFadyen and Donald MacLeod, and by Seumas MacNeill. We don't compete with those.
3. We don't promote individual styles of playing, i.e. favour one school over another. As far as I know we have no objection to individual pipers doing that. An outstanding example is *Binneas is Borerraig*, just quoted, which is understood to be the record of the playing of the late Malcolm MacPherson. But as a Society we don't have any sort of official stance in the matter. So to the question I asked just now, should we publish more explicit notations like *Binneas*, I would say no, because the more details of timing you put in, the more difficult it is to avoid leaning towards a

particular school of interpretation. I don't think I'm saying anything new here. In the original introduction to introduction to Book 1, the editors confronted the differences between the MacArthur and MacDonald schools on the one hand and the MacKay school on the other. They said

it is impossible at this date to say that one style is right and the other wrong

and their reason for preferring the MacKay MSS as a basis for editing was that

all pipers of our own day, to whom the tradition of piobaireachd playing has been handed down, are living exponents of the second school

likewise Archibald Campbell in the *Kilberry Book*, page 12

The writer makes no assertion that the MacDonald's style is bad, or that Angus MacKay's style is superior. He simply records the fact that MacDonald's style is not played, and that the style played is MacKay's.

and finally what I wrote, in Joseph MacDonald's *Compleat Theory* (p. 20)

Nothing that is said here should be taken as suggesting that Joseph MacDonald's way of playing was better or worse than any other way.

This leads on to the question of how the Society has done its editorial work in practice. All the editors have had helpers, and they also had expert pipers as advisers. But when it came to actually putting the notes on the paper and signing up to the finished product, each of them was on his own. James Campbell, who had close contact with the whole process from the 1930s to the 1990s was once asked about this directly, had it a team process or a one-man effort? "You can't do this sort of thing in harness", he said, "The very nature of the production is that is a one-man job" (Proc. Piob Soc Conference, 1995). And on that point see also the traditional signature to the preface of each of the 15 books. It says "for" the Music Committee, not "by" nor even "on behalf of" the Music Committee.



Now I want to make clear that there is an alternative view. On this view, whoever does the drafting, the final product is, so to speak, the voice of the Society itself. Published versions are in some sense official versions. Some people think that is the way it is; others think it is not but should be. Not long ago the *Piping Times* (August 2005) argued that the arrangements should be formally altered:

The Music Committee, if needs be, should appoint an individual to pursue a particular project and report back. The work can then be pored over and examined by the other committee members. Once finalised and agreed it is presented for publication... not as 'H. McSporrán for the Music Committee' but simply 'by The Music Committee'.

If these represent two extreme ways of defining the role of an editor I suppose the easy answer is to find some sort of middle way. But actually I don't think that is the answer to anything. What I suggest is that different arrangements suit different activities. I want to distinguish three sorts of activity – three different scenarios.

In Scenario 1, suppose the Music Committee sets a tune for competition but decides to recommend a particular setting, or put out a correction. The editor would prepare the music text but the committee would scrutinise it. At least that is what happened in 1992.

Scenario 2 is revision of existing publications. Here I think the *Piping Times* model does apply to some extent. At the present moment we are revising Book 1. I have reported general plans to the Music Committee, they have been approved, and you heard them a few minutes ago. If there any substantial changes to those plans I will report again and seek approval. I would also pass the draft around among interested people both within and without the committee. But I wouldn't expect the committee to apply some sort of imprimatur, or to say that some bit of information should be excluded or amended to change the emphasis.

Scenario 3 is the new work of editing original sources. The procedure so far has been that the general idea of embarking on such works was put to the Music Committee and the Society, and approved. The work took many years to complete, and progress reports were made from time. Chapters, and drafts of the whole work, were offered to

interested people for comment. But they were not submitted to any authority for final approval as to content, or editorial stance. I'm sorry if this sounds confrontational, but no editor of this kind of work could possibly accept such a condition. There has to be a relationship of trust, but the trust has to go both ways. The Society trusts the Editor to do sound work, the Editor trusts the Society to publish. There will be mistakes but the Editor accepts the responsibility.

## 7. A look ahead

The reason I want to spell this out is because I want finally to move on and look to the future. Inevitably the work of a Society like ours falls on a very few shoulders. But in the editorial field alone I hope I have convinced you that there is a very great deal to do. Who is going to take it on?

The first requirements of an editor are I suppose a basic academic training, familiarity with *ceòl mòr* and sympathy with the general aims of the Piobaireachd Society. Also a willingness to devote time and effort to the task. But we would like much more. Not just academic training but experience with the hard graft of research and publication. Not just familiarity with *ceòl mòr* but real playing skill at the professional level. And what else? Familiarity with at least some other types of music. Musicology. A good working knowledge of Gaelic. Even more, perhaps. Certainly no one yet has been found to combine all these skills. We do our best to reach professional levels but we are, and I mean this in the best sense, a group of amateurs.

But things are changing. In the past couple of decades a new generation of scholar-pipers has begun to emerge in the Scottish Universities. I won't mention any names here but if you look at the articles in magazines and the books in bookshops you will see that I don't need to. We should be looking to a younger generation to take us forward. And also – and here again I agree with the *Piping Times* article just quoted – we should not be limited to just one project, and one editor, at a time. We should identify projects, or better still be receptive to suggestions, appoint editors and support their work.

But why would any of them be interested in working with us? What can we offer? The answer, I suggest, is an avenue for publication. A young academic builds a career by peer-group recognition, and the way to be recognised is by publishing articles and books. In the sciences there are well-established outlets – learned societies that produce scientific journals, and publishers on the look-out for textbooks and research monographs. On the arts side, which is where we lie, the situation is much more difficult. There are few journals, and many of them are desperately slow to publish (one has had articles in the pipeline now for five years). There are one or two excellent publishing firms but the sort of works that we produce are not best sellers. I think there is a real possibility that we as a Society could move into this niche. We have an outlet for sales in the piping world, we have a financial base thanks to members' subscriptions and profits on sales, and we have had some success in the past in attracting extra funds for publication projects. We would have to attract the right people and make sure their working arrangements are clear and transparent. Our role models could be bodies like the English Folk Song and Dance Society or the Gaelic Society of Inverness. These also are bodies largely supported by amateur enthusiasts and staffed by volunteers, but they are recognised in the professional worlds of education and research.

I hope I've said enough and not given too much offence. As I said at the outset, the opinions I've expressed are mine only and I'd like to now to stand back and hear what other people think.