

Set Tunes for the Silver Medal Competitions in 2013

The following notes are from the piobaireachd judges' seminar held on 3 April 2013 to discuss the set tunes. They are published in the hope that they will be of some interest to competing pipers and others. They should, however, be regarded only as the output from an informal discussion and neither as a complete and authoritative analysis of the tunes nor as a set of directions on how they should be played. Likewise, the sources listed should not be taken to be comprehensive.

There are sound clips of some of the tunes, illustrating possible ways of playing them, in the members' section of the Piobaireachd Society's website at www.piobaireachd.co.uk

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Lady Anapool's Lament

PS 9 p277

A longish, but fairly straightforward tune of regular structure, with considerable similarity to 'The MacLeods' Salute'. Introductory Es are likely to be played long to give balance throughout the ground and a run-down is likely to be favoured in the second bars of lines 1 and 3. The four-note combination in the last bar of the ground might be played with the second C short and the following B long as an alternative to the way shown.

The second line of the first variation is unusual, possibly unique, in having three Cs, three Ds and three Bs in bars 1, 2 and 4 respectively. The variations follow a regular pattern.

A crunluath a mach is expected in this tune.

Melbank's Salute

PS 14 p443

A well known tune which flows musically and is not difficult to memorise, so is likely to be a popular choice. The tune is found in Angus Mackay's MS, Glen, William Ross and Ceol Mor. The PS 14 version is basically that of Glen, which is similar to Ross's, although the latter sets it out in 6/8 time.

Ross has an extra low G/low A couplet, shown as grace notes, in bar two of the ground and elsewhere, before the edre, and this is sometimes played with the low A as a full melody note, as by Thomas Pearston when he won the Gold Medal at the Argyllshire Gathering in 1968, thus adding an extra pulse to these bars.

Ross also shows the tune with an 'open' crunluath fosgailte, which is most attractive, while PS 14 has it 'closed'.

Lord MacDonald's Lament

PS 13 p425

This tune, composed by Angus MacArthur, appears in his MS and also that of Angus Mackay, whose version is adopted in PS 13. Angus MacKay has grips to low A instead of low G grace notes in some places. Angus MacArthur and Angus MacKay also have some note differences at phrase ends. Angus MacArthur's score is on the tune page. It is superior to that of Mackay and gives better guidance to interpretation of the piece than the PS version, with its 'single stem' notation.

It is a fairly long tune, and a crunluath a mach is expected.

All the Old Men paid rent but Rory

PS 11 p348

This tune is from the Campbell Canntaireachd, although the grace notes are not always consistent with the canntaireachd vocables. This should not present a problem, however, as most will play the tune as per the score in PS 11.

The key to the ground lies in expressing the first bar, probably with a fairly soft cut down from the second C to low A. The fermatas shown in the score can be a bit misleading, as the low As and low Gs may be interpreted as linking notes. It should also be noted that the throws to high G are from low A, not low G. Thereafter, the tune is fairly straightforward.

The siubhal could be played either 'down' as shown or 'up', according to preference.