

Set Tunes Demonstration Chair Alan Forbes

AF Welcome to the Set Tunes session.

The Senior tunes this year are all known favourites. Some might argue that they are not as challenging as in previous years, but nonetheless they are all excellent tunes and it will be interesting to see what the top players make of them.

The full list is

- The Princes Salute
- Lament for Ronald MacDonald of Morar
- Lady MacDonald's Lament
- Lachlan MacNeill Campbell of Kintarbert's Fancy
- The Blue Ribbon
- In Praise of Morag
- Isabel MacKay
- The Old Men of the Shells

Robert Wallace is going to demonstrate three of these tunes

Robert Wallace The first tune I will play is the Princes' Salute. It was the subject of a dispute many years ago which I don't know very much about. It is a bold salute tune which has to start with a bold statement I always feel. It is pentatonic in G but with a nice introduction of the F at the end of the line. Some settings don't have that F in it but I think that it is much better with it.

The first variation can be played up or down. I play down as per Donald MacDonald and in the context of the whole tune I think that gives a nice bit of contrast. If you play it up you just hit the same notes all the time.

Plays the ground and variation 1 singling of the Princes Salute.

It continues on like that with a doubling, taorluath, crunluath, crunluath a mach. A really fine piece of ceol mor and quite a bold tune.

The next I'm going to play is Lady MacDonald's Lament. That makes full use of the pentatonic scales, both A and G. I always think of the A part in some way representing the beauty of the lady in question and the minor key as representing the grief over the loss. It is one of the real classics I think of the repertoire. There is a lot of dodgy top hand work required. A classic piece. I think that Donald MacPherson played it in the Clan Donald competition and there are very fine recordings of it.

Plays the ground and thumb variation of Lady MacDonald's Lament.

The final tune is Ronald MacDonald of Morar. Again pentatonic in G until you come to the variations where some F's are introduced. Again it is a $\frac{3}{4}$ tune, a magnificent piece, with 3 grounds really to it. The second ground is really just the first with the addition of a connecting note and everybody's favourite is the third one which has a nice swing to it.

The only time I ever saw a standing ovation at a Piobaireachd competition was when John Burgess played this tune at Inverness, it must have been in 1976. He didn't get a prize – I think that he had a wrong note or something like that. I remember it well. It was the first time he came on with the black jacket with the red piping and the Ross kilt and he walked down the side of the Caledonian ballroom which was packed, blew up his pipe which was perfect and had a perfect high G and quite slowly made his way through the tune. He captured the audience, the place was absolutely still, walked off to a standing ovation - but no prize.

Plays the ground and first two variations of Lament for Ronald MacDonald of Morar.

AF Thank you Robert. We now move on to the Gold Medal Tunes. The selection this year for the Gold Medal is as follows

- The Battle of Bealach nam Brog
- Clan Ranald's Salute
- MacDonald of Kinlochmoidart's Lament number 2
- The MacDonald's are Simple
- Nameless Haharin odin hiharin dro
- The Rout of Glenfruin
- The Vaunting
- The Young Laird of Dungallon's Salute

I think it is fair to say that the Gold Medal Selection this year is of less well-known tunes but all excellent tunes nevertheless. To play some of them we have Peter McCalister. Peter, unlike our other two pipers this morning, has not yet played in a Gold Medal Competition but he qualifies to play this year having won one of the Silver Medals last year, the Silver medal in Oban. Peter is going to play the ground and first variation of The Battle of Bealach nam Brog, Kinlochmoidart number 2 and the Young Laird of Dungallon's Salute.

Peter McCalister. I'm just going to say a couple of words about each of these tunes so that you can just get an idea of musicality rather than history.

MacDonald of Kinlochmoidart's number 2.

This is a marvellous piece of music. Many people will know Kinlochmoidart number 1 which is often heard on the boards and number 2 has a similar air to it although it is in a different key. Donald MacLeod in his tapes says "This is a tune which should be played more often." Which is absolutely true. It is very hard to choose the tune which you are going to play sometimes, but the moment you hear the beginning of this piece you want to play it even though it lasts for

21 minutes. It is just so beautiful. One small point – in the Piobaireachd Society Collection and I'm not sure, in the Kilberry, the first B in the second bar is short, but Donald MacLeod and a lot of others play it long, and so will I.

Plays the ground of Lament for MacDonald of Kinlochmoidart number 2

The Battle of Beallach nam Brog

This is a battle tune but I was always taught that it is a sad tune perhaps written by the guy who lost the battle and that is the way I play it. I want to play the ground and the thumb variation because I think it is the most beautiful part of the tune. The thumb variation is really quite hard to memorise. It has got about 13 bars, and it is really a bit of a mystery. People think it is a fragment, or, a bit like Donald of Laggan, not an equal part of the tune but very beautiful.

Plays the ground and thumb variation of The Battle of Beallach nam Brog

The last tune I will play is a piece of The Young Laird of Dungallon which is another lovely tune. Not a tune which is often heard played, in fact I don't think I have ever heard it played. I don't know if I can say much musically about this tune because I am still feeling my way towards it. There is a recording made by Malcolm MacPherson in the Binneas is Boreraig collection and personally I think that it is a very dreadful recording but it does give you an insight perhaps into what he was thinking and the only perhaps very useful thing I have got out of it is something which I had seen in Binneas. In the written script the first variation has a nice kind of rhythm to it, then it has a kind of pause mark over the cadences, it is written all the way down. I couldn't work out what was going on there and I actually heard him play it and I thought I recognise what he means – he is pausing the bar before the cadence and then playing the cadence.

Plays the ground and V1 of The Young Laird of Dungallon's Salute

Thanks very much Peter. We can hear some beautiful tunes but also some quite demanding challenges for the Gold Medals this year.

AF We now move on to the Silver Medal Competitions. The Silver Medal tunes this year are

- Duntroon's March
- Fair Honey
- Grain in Hides and Corn in Sacks
- Lady Anapool's Lament
- Melbank's Salute
- Lord MacDonald's Lament
- All the old men paid rent but Rory
- The Parading of the MacDonalds.

Mid-length tunes. A very nice selection of tunes, very melodic stuff and I would say should give rise to an interesting Silver Medal Competition. One of the criticisms levelled at the Set Tune system as you would have heard yesterday that it is too prescriptive, not only of the tunes, but in the settings of the tunes. Jack explained that yesterday by saying that the Piobaireachd Society runs two seminars for judges every year where they discuss styles and settings. A large range of views and ideas comes out and these are recorded and put as a note on the Piobaireachd Society Website attached to the tune page. So if anyone is interested in looking at different ways of playing the tunes, particularly this year's set of Silver Medal tunes which have got quite a bit of interest and controversy about them that is the place to look.

Jack is going to play three of the tunes this morning – Grain in Hides, Duntroon's March and Lord MacDonald's Lament.

Jack Taylor

It is good to hear a hearty endorsement of the music committee's decision to set the tunes.

Lord MacDonald's Lament is one of the tunes where there is a Lord's Lament and a Lady's Lament. This time, the Lord's Lament is the smaller tune, and probably not such a fine tune as Lady MacDonald's Lament which is really a very great piece, whereas Lady Anapool gets the bottom hand tune, and the Laird of Anapool gets the soaring top hand high G tune. So just a different perception of the genders, nothing more than that I don't think.

Lord MacDonald's Lament was composed by Angus MacArthur. It is a very bonny piece of music. It is written out in the MacArthur MacGregor manuscript, and also in Angus MacKay's manuscript taken from Angus MacArthur. And that is interesting because Angus MacKay has changed it from Angus MacArthur. Did he do it deliberately or was it a mistake. There a little bits and pieces which are slightly different. But that just gives Piobaireachd its flavour. It is a melodic tune with a ground, thumb variation and quite a long taorluath and crunluath variations.

Plays the ground and thumb variation of Lord MacDonald's Lament

Now we come to the Campbell Canntaireachd and its problems. Grain in Hides. It is a bonny tune. I don't think that there is a lot known about the story apart from the fact that the grain is in the hides which means that the cattle have been well fed, and the corn is safely gathered into the sacks, so all is well with the world.

But all is not well with the world because it is in the Campbell Canntaireachd and it is somewhere else as well. Andrew Wright has translated the CC setting which has a thumb variation which many find attractive. It also changes the

low G turns so instead of two low Gs there is low A followed by low G. And that alters the characteristic. There are two extra bars at the end of the ground in the CC which are not in the rest of the tune. They may be a mistake, or it could be argued that they enhance the tune musically.

Plays the ground and V1 of Grain in Hides and Corn in Sacks.

The third tune I will play is Duntroon's March. It is one of the Duntroon tunes all of which probably have similar origins and certainly two have them have got similarities melodically – The Sound of the Waves and Duntroon's March .

Duntroon's March is only found in the Campbell Canntaireachd and we set it quite innocently as a good tune. Then I had a phone call from a teacher who said I can't work out this first variation. The way it is written out in the Piobaireachd Society score the singling and the doubling are very similar and what could we do with it to make it contrasting. So I had a look at the tune, not really knowing it very well, and uncharacteristically for me I looked at the Campbell Canntaireachd. I thought that maybe it has been mistranslated in the second and third lines of the first variation.

Not being an expert I consulted four different experts, and I've had four different opinions. Everyone is agreed that there are notes in the Canntaireachd which are not recorded in the Piobaireachd Society score. The experts differ about timing and cadences which is to be expected, and also in the interpretation of some of the canntaireachd vocables. At the beginning of V1 the vocable *hin* occurs. This is either low A with a gracenote, or Roderick Cannon's interpretation is that it means E followed by low A. You can see his interpretation and the others on the Piobaireachd Society website. I'll play one of the interpretations of the Campbell Canntiareachd setting.

Plays ground and V1 1 of Duntroon's March

