

Set Tunes for the Gold Medal Competitions in 2014

The following notes are from the piobaireachd judges' seminar held on 17 November 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

Alan Forbes
Music Committee Secretary

The Big Spree

PS 1 p11

A well known and often played tune. There may be some slight timing differences in the ground. Some prominent pipers played a short C down to a longer low A in the first bar and elsewhere. In the second last bar, Bob Nicol omitted the first C, going straight to the E with a G grace note.

The Ceol Mor setting, going to E instead of C in variation 1 and doubling, is an attractive alternative to the conventional setting. There is a recording of this setting by James McIntosh on the PS website.

The crunluath fosgailte may be played 'closed' or 'open' (or, indeed, both as some pipers, including Robert Reid, played in the past).

There are many other recordings in circulation, both on the PS website and on CDs. There are two pages of interesting notes on the tune in 'Side Lights on Kilberry'.

The Battle of the Pass of Crieff

PS 1 p15; K p90

A popular tune for which instructional recordings exist by Donald MacLeod, R U Brown and R B Nicol and there are a couple of recordings on the PS website. Settings from other sources differ but most pipers play as in PS1 & K. A style which Bob Nicol had from John MacDonald, Inverness, omits the last cadence on B at the end of lines 1, 2 and 3. The 'broken' crunluath movement which appears in the crunluath variation and doubling is depicted slightly differently in PS1 and K and either approach might be heard.

Lady Margaret MacDonald's Salute

PS 3 p93; K p29

The tune is played pretty much as in PS3 and K. There are recordings by John MacDougall and Iain Speirs on the PS website.

The MacArthur MacGregor setting is attractive but much shorter than the version in PS3 and K.

Lament for the Departure of King James

PS 3 p89; K p68

The tune centres around the many double echos, which need to be played with sensitivity to get the most out of the music. The first variation should be given space and not snatched.

The embellishment on high G in bar 3 of lines 1 and 2 of the first variation is shown in PS3 with a high A grace note separating the two E grace notes, whereas K has a high G. Either is acceptable.

There is a Donald MacDonald setting, which is much shorter than the one in PS3 and K.