

Set Tunes for the Silver 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

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The Groat

PS 1 p18; K p25

In the second last bar of the ground the first E may be cut, as shown in PS1 and K, or played fairly evenly with the following note as described in editorial note (2) in PS1. In the variations it is easy to go off the tune so concentration is required.

PS1 indicates a 'crunluath a mach', by which is meant an 'open' crunluath fosgailte. For the purposes of the 2014 competitions it will be acceptable to play the crunluath variation either 'closed' or 'open' or 'closed' followed by 'open' according to the competitor's preference.

There is a good recording of this tune played by William M MacDonald on the PS website.

MacCrimmon's Sweetheart

PS 7 p205; K p28

A fairly straightforward tune, although there are many different ways of handling the ground. There are also many recordings available on the PS website and elsewhere.

The final low A in variation 2 is sometimes left out, the variation effectively ending on B, which is slightly lengthened. The low A at the start of the next variation is played heavy, with a high G grace note, to compensate. The tune was taught in this way by the late PM Robert Reid.

PS7 indicates a 'crunluath a mach', by which is meant an 'open' crunluath fosgailte. For the purposes of the 2014 competitions it will be acceptable to play the crunluath variation either 'closed' or 'open' or 'closed' followed by 'open' according to the competitor's preference.

The Little Spree

PS 7 p197; K p36

A primary piobaireachd, played in two-bar phrases. As mentioned in the editorial notes, the Cs marked (1) are Bs in Donald MacDonald's setting and are often played as such. The semi-quavers with embellishments in the last two bars should not be aggressively cut - in effect there is an extra beat in each of these bars. The first variation might be played 'up' or 'down', as shown.

PS7 indicates a 'crunluath a mach', by which is meant an 'open' crunluath fosgailte. For the purposes of the 2014 competitions it will be acceptable to play the crunluath variation either 'closed' or 'open' or 'closed' followed by 'open' according to the competitor's preference.

Lament for Captain MacDougall

PS 6 p164; K p5

A Very well-known tune, frequently played in competitions. The main difference in playing the ground is in the penultimate bar, which can either be played as written, that is with 10 notes, or by removing the C/E couplet to play 8 notes. Also, when playing the 10 notes, some play in 5 pulses, some compress it into four pulses. 'Sidelights on Kilberry' discusses this and points out that similar things occur in other tunes. In Angus Mackay's MS this bar is shown with 5 pulses.

There is a danger that the first variation is played too slowly - it needs to be kept going so that it doesn't drag. The first two bars of this variation are very similar to the first variation of The Little Spree.