

The Piobaireachd Compositions of John MacLellan

Colin MacLellan

Chair Walter Gray

The next stage of our adventure and the last presentation is something I have greatly looked forward to and I am very pleased to chair this session

The subject is the Piobaireachd compositions of John A MacLellan introduces one of the few recent pipers to embrace the modern composition idiom.

Salute to the Piobaireachd Society is a fine example as well as the possibly better known Phantom Piper of Corrieyairack.

As a brief introduction, Captain John MacLellan MBE was a champion piper, a first class Pipe Major, instructor and composer. He had a distinguished army career with the Cameron Highlanders, taking over from Willie Ross in 1959 as the chief instructor at the Army School of Piping in Edinburgh Castle. When no longer competing John devoted a lot of his time to the Piobaireachd Society including his single contribution in the important role of Secretary to the Music Committee. He was awarded the Balvenie Medal in 1989 in recognition of his life-long achievement.

I have the privilege to introduce Colin. I can't think of anyone better qualified to talk to us on the subject of his father's tunes. I look forward to being given an insight into the world of the modern Ceol Mor composer. Most of you will be aware of Colin MacLellan, and be aware of his talents as a competing piper, Pipe Major, reed-maker, instructor and promotor of new compositions of Piobaireachd.

Colin is Secretary and Trustee of the Captain John A MacLellan MBE Memorial Trust, and a leading light behind the trust's biennial memorial recital and dinner which has been held at the Royal Scot's Club in Edinburgh, where the Piobaireachd Compositions of his father are presented by the leading pipers of the present generation of competing pipers.

Colin was born in Dingwall, Ross-shire in 1958. The family moved to Edinburgh shortly after his birth when his father was appointed to the position of chief instructor to the Army School of Piping. Colin had a very successful competing career as a junior before moving to Canada in 1977 at the young age of 18. He spent the next 22 years in the province of Ontario where he instructed and conducted a successful reed-making operation. In 1986 he moved to Glengarry

County, Ontario and was appointed piping teacher to Dundas and Glengarry County Schools Board as well as Pipe Major of the Glengarry band and director of the Glengarry School of Piping. He took his band from grade 4 to grade 1. He studied political science at the Carlton University in Ottawa gaining a BA degree, and later at St Katherine's University in Ontario achieving a Bachelor of Education degree as well as graduate certificates from the Institute of Piping as well as the Province of Ontario's teaching certificate.

Colin was a regular visitor to Scotland to compete. Amongst his many prizes was the Highland Society's Gold Medal at the Northern meeting in 1982. There is a whole list of competitions he has won multiple times.

On his return to Scotland with his wife Jenny in 1999 he took up the position of Head of Piping Studies being responsible for educational initiatives at the National Piping Centre as well as being instrumental in the creation of the BA Scottish Music Piping degree. He has continued to be influential in the piping community since his return.

So please welcome Colin MacLellan.

Colin MacLellan

Thank you for that tremendous introduction. I am used to these introductions where I am introduced and then there is a whole biography and life history of my father. I don't mind that at all because it has been the privilege of my life to be the son of Captain John A MacLellan MBE, and it continues to be so. If you were brought in the way that I was, it was a very rarified and privileged position to be in and sometimes not as easy as some people may think.

It is a great thing to be invited here to the Piobaireachd Society to talk about the new collection of my father's piobaireachd works. He composed 11 tunes in his lifetime. Many of them have been published before in his own light music books but I thought that it would be an appropriate thing to do to bring them together in one collection.

When I was thinking about the style of the book I thought to myself what sort of format would we have? Obviously I would need to have the tunes typeset. I thought should we lay it out as done by the Piobaireachd Society, with the tune and possibly some notes, and a paragraph on the right hand page explaining perhaps some of the intricacies of how to play the music. And then

several other people suggested to me that I make it a more anecdotal sort of style, and I tried to write out a couple of chapters on that. I sought people's opinion on that after they had read a couple chapters I'd written, and almost unanimously people told me that the anecdotal style was much more interesting with good photographs, so that is what I have chosen to do.

So the 11 tunes are there with notes about the names of the tunes, the origins of them, and some illustrations and pictures. The 12th tune in the book is actually composed by myself. I have included it because it is the only piobaireachd I have composed, and I might tell you a little bit about that later on. I thought my father would want it included and it would make a nice round dozen to finish off the collection with.

What I'd like to do to start the presentation is perhaps somewhat unusually to go back to John Wilson's talk of last night. One of the things I want to do this afternoon is not only to talk about my father's tunes, but also to talk about new piobaireachd in general and other people's piobaireachd perhaps a little bit because it is not just about my father's tunes, it is not just about Donald MacLeod's tunes, it is about a whole lot of other people who have composed perfectly good tunes as well.

The reason I have started with this example, the Lament for Islay Flora MacLeod, is that this is the tune which when I was about 12 years of age that got me interested in new piobaireachd at that early age. Because at that time people were composing piobaireachd, and they were being committed to print. PM MacLeod published his own book, my father published his tunes, and several other people were entering composing competitions, which was a great incentive to the composing of new piobaireachd.

But I heard this tune on a vinyl album that Pipe Major MacLeod had made. I can't remember the name of the album. There is a very nice photograph of him, a volume 1 and volume 2. He is holding a shillelagh on the album cover. He plays a selection of light music and a couple of his own piobaireachd, and one of them is Lament for Islay Flora MacLeod. It is not commonly played, even amongst PM MacLeod's tunes. I listened to it and I thought it was wonderful in that it was so simple and so highly melodic, so rhythmically beautiful.

Much later on, in 1983, I was invited to teach at a summer school in Saskatchewan. Pipe Major MacLeod had attended this school for many years previously. He had just died and I was invited to teach at the school after that.

I became friendly with the director of the school who was a great friend of PM MacLeod, a PM Willie MacLeod from Pine Falls, Manitoba. They had met I believe at one of the wartime courses in the Castle. Islay Flora MacLeod was PM Willie MacLeod's wife, and during the weekends of this summer school they used to go off and play golf together. One of the variations in this tune is an imitation of Islay Flora MacLeod's golf swing.

So that was the kind of composed Donald MacLeod was. I'll play you the tune, because this was the first tune that I thought, at 12 years of age, this is marvellous stuff. So I grew up with no preconceptions about new piobaireachd being in any sort of way a lesser product than the old MacCrimmon tunes.

Sound Clip 1 Lament for Islay Flora MacLeod.

That is the tune which made me realise that piobaireachd can be really attractive and I think you will agree that is an example of simplicity at its absolute best.

Leading on from that we can talk about compositions from the 1960s. Several composing competitions were put on to encourage the composition of new piobaireachd. Several organisations did this, and there was one very major one in 1966 put on by one of the BBC trusts, for which they apparently received 66 entries.

One of the downsides of these composing competitions is that often the tunes that are successful are the ones which get recognised, and the ones which are unsuccessful – I don't know where they go – but in that particular event in 1966 about 11 of the entries were published in a small booklet, 100 copies of which were distributed to different piping societies. But what happened to the other 55 tunes? And where are they?

The result of the composing competition was interesting because it was won by Mr Angus MacPherson of Invershin, with Salute to the MacCrimmon Cairn at Boreraig, 2nd prize went to Hector MacLean who composed a tune I think called MacLean's March, 3rd prize I can't remember, and the tune we are going to hear fairly shortly, a tune called Farewell to the Queen's Ferry, composed by my father, was awarded 4th prize.

These composing competitions are judged by somebody, music is submitted, the tunes are evaluated, but I don't think that the results are always too reliable. The most famous anomaly was when there was a march composing

competition where there were three prizes. The first prize went to a tune called The Knightswood Highlanders, by I think it was Hector MacLean, the second went to a tune composed by my father called Alan Brown of Port Appin which was a very good march, and the third prize was the famous and successful The Knightswood Ceilidh by PM Donald MacLeod, and we all know which of these tune has been the most often played and accepted since then.

So that is a very interesting thing and it brings home to me that a tune must be heard more than once. Quite often in these composing competitions it is a kind of one shot deal where somebody is looking at the music and has to evaluate off the page the merits or otherwise of that particular musician. So that is why it is quite important that, when I was putting together this book, I thought we have to accompany it with illustrations of people playing the tunes. Not to have people instructed on how to play them, but just as a basic thing, because in nearly all of the tunes there is some little bit that you can't bring out properly, and you need to get across the feel of it. The CDs are included so that people can listen to the tune, and not necessarily copy the style of the tune, but so that they can perhaps pick up those little nuances.

If we go back to Lament for Islay Flora MacLeod, I think that one of the reasons that has not become a widely played tune is that it is probably very difficult to take off the page in the way that PM MacLeod played it.

(Sings start of Taorluath variation)

So that is an example of a tune which has remained on the page and not really accepted yet as to the quality that it actually has.

One of the first of John MacLellan's compositions I want to show you is Salute to the Succession of Lord Carnock of Clan Nicolson. This brings home that my father's tunes, and PM MacLeod's tunes for that matter, are all different. It is hard for me to see that there is anything in the 11 tunes which says that they are composed by the same person.

All 11 tunes seem to be unique compositions, but there are some of them where I can see where the inspiration is coming from. My dad was at one time composing tunes for the family, and this one is for my daughter Emma or my sister's daughter Olivia. He got this melody in his head, and he thought that it was a great little melody. It is a nice tuny little thing. I remember that he tried it in about 3 different time signatures, but he couldn't really get it to fit in any of them.

He tried it first in 6/8 (sings), then he put it in one of his books in 2/4 time (sings), and I don't think he can have been satisfied, so he put in 6/8 time, but different to the previous 6/8 version, in the same book, and sort of pawned it off on my daughter Emily.

But fortunately in my opinion he still wasn't happy. He never told me at all, but this is what he ended up with in the end. It became this tune. It was a commission from Clan Nicolson, sometime in the 1980s, and that melody became (sings) – and, bingo, perseverance paid off, because he made it into a really nice tune. We had a great performance of it at one of the dinner recitals by David Wilton, which I'd like to play you.

Sound Clip 2 Salute to the Succession (of Lord Carnock Chief of Clan Nicolson).

It starts almost like the Lament for the Children. It is one of my favourite tunes of my father's. It is really quite inventive, and I'm sure that is where he got the inspiration for it. He always used to tell me that most piobaireachd composers had to wait for a bit of inspiration, a bit of spark.

There is an interview he gave to Iain Speirs which I will refer to later. Iain was a high school student and was doing this as part of his Higher Music. My father explains that you have to get that inspiration, and then get it down straight away, and then build the tune around it. Which is like most people I think.

That particular tune was a commission from Lord Carnock. There is correspondence in the house where he gets a bit narked about the slowness in coming up with the tune. My father has written a letter trying to explain that he hasn't had a spark of inspiration yet. I can just see him poring over these light music tunes thinking how he could satisfy Lord Carnock with a tune.

The next composing competition was in 1969. The Saltire Society won a composing competition which had a lot of entries as well. My father was successful in that competition where his composition The Phantom Piper of Corrieyairack was the recipient of the first prize. That became a famous composition not just because it was an excellent composition, but because of the story and the legend behind the tune which we will perhaps go onto later. I don't want to dwell too long on that tune, because I think everyone knows it. That is the tune which has become associated with my father quite a bit. A bit like an actor getting typecast with a role – John MacLellan, Phantom Piper of Corrieyairack, that's a great tune. The fact is that it is an excellent tune, but I

don't think that it is his best tune. I don't even think that it is his second best tune, which I hope to demonstrate to you in a while, but it is the one that has become associated with him.

One of the tunes which I think is one of his really good ones is the second one he composed. It is quite appropriate because it is called Farewell to the Queen's Ferry. It was composed in 1964. I've explained it in the book. This is the way the book was done, with the tune on the left hand page and the story and pictures on the right hand page. I remember as a boy going on holiday. This is before the present Forth Road Bridge was built. You waited in the line for the ferry. And there was no Kessock Bridge in Inverness. It was a long arduous trip.

The tune Farewell to the Queen's Ferry is one of his very best ones in my opinion. All these tunes tend to be full length tunes and this is a big magnificent tune. When you think of that era, waiting for the ferry boats to come by, and the new bridge being built. We have a similar thing right now as the second Forth Crossing nears completion. Jenny has kindly agreed to play us a part of Farewell to the Queen's Ferry.

Sound Clip 3 Farewell to the Queensferry Jenny Hazzard

Thank you Jenny. That was very lovely.

So that is Farewell to the Queensferry. That was his second tune. His first tune was Salute to the Queens Own Highlanders composed in 1961. It is a full length tune, an excellent tune, and a solid tune with Taorluath and Crunluath singling and doubling and crunluath a mach. I have the scores for it, and a recording of him playing it himself. His handwriting did not specify a crunluath a mach. He was quite particular about those sort of things. The played recording includes a crunluath a mach. So I had to make a decision for the book.

The third tune was The Phantom Piper of Corrieyairack which is a smaller tune, a brebach tune.

So it is about now that you see how he composed. There was no simple tune, he started composing in 1961 when he was vastly experienced as a player and a teacher. I don't know what the catalyst was. I suppose it was just that he ended up in Edinburgh at the Castle, and although he was busy there, there were long periods of time when he wasn't all that busy, between courses for

example. He had enough time to pursue composing and also to do things like record tunes on the pipes.

In an interview Iain Speirs did with him he asked if one day the entire Piobaireachd Society collection would be recorded. He was a modest man my father and he replied that he thought that might have been done already. At that point it was books 1-9. I've got those recordings, 156 tunes on the pipes from start to finish, a great resource for learning and teaching, which I hope to make available one day.

So if you look at the development of composing. If you go back to the 1600s it had reached a high point with for example the Lament for the Children, which has yet I believe to be bettered. Some things have come pretty close, but Lament for the Children I think is still the high water mark of piobaireachd composing. That was hundreds of years ago.

The question remains, have we actually progressed? I believe that we have, because progress was even made by pupils of the MacCrimmons, Iain Dall MacKay who composes the magnificent unjust Incarceration. That perhaps in some people's view would be almost as good or better. These are magnificent tunes, in complete form, the structure, the intricacies of gracings and embellishments, it is highly intricate stuff.

Then suddenly it stops for a bit. It is interesting in some of those tunes how different composers can be. I often think of Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon, composed by Iain Dall MacKay, and he is the same man who composed the Blind Piper's Obstinacy. You would hardly believe those tunes were composed by the same person.

After a lull, later, in the 1700s, you get a different style of composing. For example, the Princes Salute, which is a lot plainer composition. It is a very melodic composition, but you get a much plainer style of groundwork and variations, and that continues to later on in the 1800s to people like John MacKay who continues that vein. A little before that you have got Lament for Donald Ban MacCrimmon, which is a great big magnificent tune, but a plain composition. The intricacies have gone, and length and repetition of the variations become the fashion if you like. Then John MacKay of Raasay composes tunes like Lament for MacLeod of Colbeck and Melbank's Salute. They are all highly melodic plain compositions.

I go back to talks my father did. He stood here at the Piobaireachd Society in 1974. He was one of the organisers, the movers and shakers. I remember him getting ready for talks such as these, and I must say that I have been a lot calmer and worried about it less than he did, because I remember him getting ready. He had everything down in written form, and I remember him in the house actually rehearsing it to make sure that he didn't have any slipups. I remember my mother saying, look Ian (he was called Ian by my mother's side of the family), if you go on too long, I'll give you the signal then you can either stop or wrap it up. Or she said I will gauge the audience. If I see they are getting bored, I will give you the signal as well. I don't think he ever did get that.

I think that the era of modern composing begins with people like John Ban MacKenzie with His Father's Lament for Donald MacKenzie, or Mrs Smith's Salute. They are still in this really beautiful highly melodic but long tunes. I think those would be the tunes which are more considered to be modern compositions, but I think that we maybe should not have the term modern compositions because that puts a label on things. I think that it makes tunes curiosities rather than just calling them new tunes. Let's just call them new tunes from now on, as opposed to modern piobaireachd. There is a bit of a connotation about modern which means it is something to be appreciated, but it is not quite as good as new.

I have taken a great interest in this, not just because of my father's compositions, but because of other people's compositions, and I am absolutely convinced that these are magnificent tunes which are much better than the majority of the tunes which published in the Society's collections. Some are worthy of being put up there with the best tunes ever composed.

Then you get into the more modern tunes, like those of Pipe Major MacLeod and others. G S MacLennan composed tunes, Donald MacLeod started early on with Caber Feidh gu Brath and the Lament for Peter James MacInnes. John Wilson pronounced this tune properly the last night, MacMurchie's Salute. My father comes in with the likes of Farewell to the Queensferry and Willie Barrie follows on with the magnificent tune, Andrew MacNeill of Colonsay.

When it comes to the composing of Piobaireachd, Seamus MacNeill said once, and I think he was quite right, he said just about anybody could compose a piobaireachd. I think he was right because he said that there is a certain structure to the thing. We have got that, we can have a ground, then you can

follow it with maybe a dithis variation, a taorluath and a crunluath. So long as the notes aren't discordant and they fit together in a certain form, pretty well anybody can bash together a pretty reasonable tune. So it is a wonder we don't have more people composing piobaireachd.

Maybe we have got to ask ourselves if there is an incentive any more for composing new piobaireachd, because one of the things that has definitely happened in the past, and one which was a big incentive for me to try and get my father's tunes more widely heard and appreciated was the fact that the very last tune that he wrote, and I will tell you the circumstances of that tune later, I find it quite sad that that tune, which is a magnificent tune, had been seen only by myself. It sat there on a forlorn sheet of paper for 25 years.

What I'd like to do next is play you an example of that interview that Iain Speirs did with my father. It is in our house in Dean Park Crescent. Iain came up at the age of about 16 to interview John MacLellan on composing Piobaireachd. This is a 2 minute sample from this. I think he asks him about the actual compositions of the tunes.

That was a conversation with Iain Speirs. Iain and I often talk about that visit, about how intimidated he was coming up the stairs to do this interview. Several people remark on those visits. My great friend Euan Anderson chuckle to this day when he had to go up to 14 Dean Park Crescent for a reed. He rang the bell, the door was answered, he was shown upstairs and my father asked him if he had brought his chanter with him. He said I'm terribly sorry I don't have the chanter with me. To which he got the answer "Euan, when you go for a pair of shoes do you bring your feet?". And off he had to scurry, back home to get the chanter.

I'd now like to highlight a couple of points in my father's compositions. One of the things he was good at was taking a phrase of music and developing it. I sometimes liked to guess what the little phrase was that got him going. He sat down with me close to the end of his life and he discussed with me how he thought that the first variation of the tune was an important part of the tune. He said that all of the great tunes have a fantastic foundation in the first variation. Sometimes he liked to get the starting point in his head and make that the first variation.

So it is in Farewell to the Queensferry. It has got a wonderful turn of phrase which I think the tune is built along. If we come along from say the middle of

the second line, the phrase that I would like to highlight in both the ground and variation one is this one which starts at the beginning of line three in both these variations. It is a marvellous little bit. (Sings).

That is possibly my personal favourite. And if we go on to another example, the Phantom Piper of Corrieyairack, he has just got one note in there which became a bit confused, because it was not printed accurately in a couple of the sources, and it became a bit of a question as to what was the definitive setting of the tune. It occurs in Variation 1 singling. I'll start singing half way through the second line. The fifth bar is quite tricky – when he first scored it he put a horizontal line above the C (4th note in the bar). I decided to leave it, with the aid of a very good recording of my father, as two even quavers. It should help people to get the gist of how that little subtlety goes. But the note I am talking about is this C here (5th note bar 1 line 3) – you would expect a low A, but the C is there for no other reason than it sounds nice.

So that is the Phantom Piper of Corrieyairack and the little bit of inspiration that he got there. I think that C there got printed somewhere in the wrong place and caused a great deal of confusion.

After the Phantom Piper we've got what I consider to be his best Piobaireachd by some length. I remember when he made this tune he was really pleased with it. At the time he was teaching Brian Lamond who was about 16 at the time. I used to listen to his lessons. I made a point of being home when Brian came because it was so good. One of the things he used to do when he composed a new Piobaireachd – and it is one of the regrets that I have because I was in Canada – when he composed a tune he would get somebody to play it, mainly on the radio. Robert Wallace did Lullaby for Iain. Gavin Stoddart was one of the people who used to get that call, and when Gavin got the call "Gavin, this is John MacLellan", he knew straight away that this was his week ruined, because there would be a Piobaireachd to learn. He would say "Gavin, I've composed a new tune and it is to be played on the radio next Wednesday night. Would you come round and get the music."

Brian Lamond was the person who played The Edinburgh Piobaireachd, aged 16. He made a magnificent job of it. Getting back to the inspirations, this is another one where I think I can detect where he may have got the inspiration for this tune. I don't think the start of this is completely original. My father used always to tell me that the greatest opening in Piobaireachd is the big nameless tune. He thought that was the grandest piece of Piobaireachd there

is. If you play that tune, just make it as big and as magnificent as you can. (Sings). I think that there are similarities at the start of this tune. (Sings).

Jenny is going to play the ground of The Edinburgh Piobaireachd

Sound Clip 3 The Edinburgh Piobaireachd played by Jenny Hazzard.

There is a funny story about this tune, aside from the fact that it is a magnificent tune. It was composed specifically for a Piobaireachd composing competition that I think the Piobaireachd Society may have had a hand in organising. It was sponsored by Kennerty Dairies.

I remember that my father was very excited about this tune as I hope you agree it is very good. There were many entries sent in, and he eagerly awaited the result as he did for most of them because he always thought he was going to win. Most of the time he did, but sometimes he didn't. This one was one of the times that he didn't, because all the entries were returned as being not any good.

It was a grievous insult to my father, and I remember that he took it very badly. I remember being at a Grant's Championship ceilidh, when it was called the Grant's Championship, and he was bemoaning the fact to Seamus MacNeill that his tune had been sent back with the "shower of other tunes" was I think how he described it. Seamus was one of the one or two people who had the nerve and wit to make fun from time to time of my father. The other was my great friend Euan Anderson who could wrap my father round his little finger. Seamus could do it as well, and he put his arm round my father and said "Well never mind John, we will publish it in the Piping Times." My father's face lit up at this. He thought that it would be a good consolation prize, until Seamus totally deflated him by adding the aside "under the title Rotten Piobaireachd of the Month".

That is why I say that sometimes the result of these composition competitions are unreliable in that it results in possibly some of the very best tunes being overlooked. Some tunes which have been successful have been placed ahead of other tunes which on further reflection warranted a much better look at them.

That is one of the reasons I am holding the dinners with the recordings, so that the tunes are heard. One of the things I have neglected to say as I come towards the end of my talk is that I am indebted to the pipers who have

performed at the dinner recitals for us and have allowed us for the benefit of the trust to include their playing as part of the two CDs which accompany the book.

The first three tunes is my father playing, Salute to the Queens Own Highlanders, Farewell to the Queensferry and The Phantom Piper of Corrieyairack, then Murray Henderson and Iain Speirs play the Edinburgh Piobaireachd, Iain Speirs also plays A Welcome for Patrick Struan and A Lullaby for Iain, Gordon Walker plays Am Bratach Gorm, I have played the last two tunes which are For My Lass Fair Pretty and Highland, and my own tune at the end, Salute to Sir John A MacDonald. This was successful in a composing competition right at the end of my father's life.

To close the talk I'd like to tell you the story of For My Lass Fair Pretty and Highland. This was the last tune my father composed. He had been getting ready for a composing competition. I remember visiting him in February 1991. He was disturbingly ill, but he was hard at work making this tune. There was nothing he loved more than a Piobaireachd composing competition, and the first prize he had already half put in his pocket, and he was talking excitedly about what he was going to but with the \$700 he thought was coming his way. So he composed this tune which was a lovely tune.

My mother had always wanted a piobaireachd. She and my father were devoted to one another. She had always said that when she heard the one she really liked, she would ask for that one. My father asked if I would record the tune, and I did that on the practice chanter. A day later my mother came up to me and said that my father was not at all pleased with that recording you made. And I said, what is wrong with it. She said, I think he wants it on the pipes.

So I went to my father and said "You know Dad, do you not think that would be a lot better if it was on the pipes." He replied "You know I never thought of that." I didn't have pipes with me, being on a study break. I put together his pipes which hadn't been played for about six years, and I recorded the tune. Off I went to Canada with it to post to the organisers. But not before my mother said "I really like that tune. Of all the tunes, that's the tune that I would like for myself. I remember him saying, no you can't have that tune, it is for a composing competition.

The tune was not successful in the competition, and I was able to name it for my mother. As I said they were utterly devoted to one another. His name on her side of the family was Iain, not John. I don't know where that came from because on my mother's side there was no Gaelic, they had no reason to call him Iain. All his birthday cards and letters to my mother are always signed Iain.

He always used to call her My Bonny Blond Lassie. He called her that maybe 10 times a day. So I decided that was what I wanted to call the tune. But I thought that for the name of a piobaireachd you have got to make it the right tone, so I thought maybe this might sound more appropriate in Gaelic. So I asked Angus MacDonald. He came back with a Gaelic title which was quite lengthy. I asked him what the literal translation of that was. So the literal translation was For my Lass Fair Pretty and Highland. So I thought that sounds really nice, that's what we will call it.

It is a lovely tune. It is one of these really unique tunes. It has got a wonderful first variation, which is quite unique. Variation 1 goes something like this. So here is Jenny to play the last tune my father composed.

Sound Clip 4 My Lass Pretty Fair and Highland played by Jenny Hazzard.

Thanks Jenny, that was wonderful. That is my father's bagpipe which Jenny plays now, which he gave to me in 1981. I played it for a long time, and when I stopped competing I gave it to Jenny.

In closing, I'd like to make a couple of remarks, similar to David at the end of his talk this morning. I think that the two major composers of Piobaireachd in the 20th century without doubt were my father and Pipe Major MacLeod. I believe that they were modest to a degree which was not all that helpful. There weren't good at pushing themselves, or their tunes, forward, and I know that they were very reluctant when they were still alive to have anything to do with their tunes being recommended for set lists. They both had enough confidence in their compositions and the quality of them that people would take them up and play them, and would enjoy them. Unfortunately that won't probably be the case at all. For three reasons. Firstly, the tunes have not been circulated nearly widely enough. That is one of my primary reasons for making this book available. And the second reason is quite simply because pipers have not heard the tunes. Pipers have a tremendous amount on their plate these days. They can't be learning The Phantom Piper of Corriearyk and The Lament for Islay Flora MacLeod when they have to learn The Rout of the MacPhees

and The MacDonalds are Simple. Which are OK, but they have all been set before, and nobody is still playing them.

So what I would say is that we need to have performances of these tunes. That was my ultimate goal. The first time I played in the PM Donald MacLeod competition in Stornoway and learnt one of the tunes for it I think I played the tune Salute to the White Primrose. Then I observed and watched as people started to teach those tunes, particularly the North American teachers. They are very appropriate for starting beginners off, and you started hearing them now and again, and people began to really like and appreciate the compositions. That would not have happened if pipers had not been forced to learn these tunes.

And so it is with our dinner. Normally we like to try and give the pipers their own choice of the music. But it is of course a prerequisite that you have to learn the tune, and the reaction from some of the pipers has been quite astonishing, particularly Murray Henderson who was ebullient in his praise of the works. He said he had no idea these tunes were so good.

So I had an idea. It was a very successful thing which I learnt in Canada. Canada has USA to the south, and as Pierre Trudeau once said, it is like living next to an elephant – if it falls over it will crush you. In Canadian broadcasting the Canadian Radiotelecommunications Corporation has had to put in guidelines on minimum Canadian content for Canadian broadcasting. There has to be 35% Canadian movies, news broadcasts have to be 45% Canadian content. That is to guard against US culture engulfing Canada.

I got thinking – what is wrong with – the Stornoway competition, and ourselves, are doing it, but spending thousands of pounds to do it, probably with minimal effect. The Society here has the power to make it all happen for nothing, in one of the following two ways, I think.

One is to adopt something like the Canadian content guidelines, saying, you know, one of the goals of our society, whether it is written down or not, should be to encourage the composition of new piobaireachd. And that hasn't really been happening lately. The Society has encouraged plenty of other things, but, apart from encouraging composing competitions, which has had little effect, these tunes just are not heard. I might discover 55 tunes from the BBC composing competition on a shelf, under 60 piobaireachd books in our house.

So why not have 40% of all set lists composed from say 1895 onwards. It doesn't have to be 1960 onwards, it doesn't have to be the year 2000 onwards. As I was saying, maybe a new piobaireachd composition is from about the 1880's onwards.

Another idea of mine is quite simply to say to pipers, look, you submit 2 of the set tunes, and the other 2 you submit cannot have appeared in the Piobaireachd Society collection or the Kilberry book. They can play anything they want, so long as it has not been published by the Piobaireachd Society, or in the Kilberry book. And that means that they can play for example For my Lass, Pretty, Fair and Highland, if they want, or they can play the Donald MacDonald setting of Too Long in this Condition.

Because that has been the criticism. The Piobaireachd Society books are out there, and on the right hand page, which some people won't bother to read, there is a very detailed analysis, and reference to all the different kind of settings. The Piobaireachd Society has always said you must play it this way, or that way. I don't agree with that at all. But I think that this idea of setting half of the tunes, but, otherwise allow the players to select something which does not appear in the Piobaireachd Society or Kilberry collections.

So I would like to leave you with that little thought. In no way am I making a criticism there. I am making a suggestion. But one thing that I am passionate about, and I will be for the rest of my days, is to get these tunes, not just my father's tunes, it is Pipe Major MacLeod's tunes, it is tunes by people like William Barrie, Scott MacAuley wrote a great tune, Simon Forbes up north has written great tunes, Hugh MacCallum has written Raising the Standard at Glenfinnan, they are countless, there are hundreds of them. And most of them are really good.

At the bottom end, as Seamus (MacNeill) suggested, you can write a tune if you have minimal knowledge on the back of a fag packet. But most of these tunes have been given a great deal of thought. They have been composed by people who have had far more experience of piping, and who have given far more thought, than some of the great composers of the past. All that these tunes need is to be heard. And the pipers need to be forced to play them. That sounds a bit prescriptive, but they won't, unless they are prescribed, or adopt my idea of having tunes played which are not in the Piobaireachd Society collection or the Kilberry book. And if they want to pick a wee tiddling

thing and play it in the Clasp, that is their decision. They probably won't win anything, but they won't spend long learning it.

So I can see eyes glazing over now, I can see my mother there signalling, so I'll take some questions if you have any.

David Hester

One of the things I'm concerned about regarding our roadmap, at alt pibroch club I'm just concerned about getting primary sources out there, and by that I mean original material, building on the momentum and distribution capability that the internet represents, I want you to get copyright and get paid for what those compositions represent, but is there an aspect of that e-commerce side that we can brainstorm around so that new composers, modern composers, can have a site that we can point to, so that when the set list comes out, they can point to any of these others, so that they know where to go to so that they can find those others. My message is, we need to embrace the new media.

CM

One of my ideas with the book, it is a pretty reasonable price, but you won't see anywhere in that book a copyright mark, or anything that says do not copy, do not sell to your friends, do not give it away. I want these things to be copied, to be given away, so feel free to make any CDs with your computer and pass them around. We need to make back the production costs of this book. If you want this book for free, all you have got to do is wait for 10 years. The whole object of this is to circulate the music.

Hamish Nicolson

It brought back memories for me. Some years ago at a conference, your father very kindly came up to me and asked me my name. When I said Nicolson, he told me that he had composed a piobaireachd to my clan chief.

CM

He greatly enjoyed doing these talks, and as I said, he put a great deal of effort into them. I remember how apprehensive he was of doing them, and he often used to talk about falling into traps and things like that. My mother was very good at calming him down and saying I'll be with you and she used to go over

the text correcting all the little grammatical mistakes and this kind of thing. When he got out there, he was so used to doing it, nobody would have guessed what his mental state was during preparation. He kept all those lectures, so in our house just now there are all his talks, at summer schools, at the Piobaireachd Society, he had a very meticulous way of keeping the records.

If there are no more questions, thank you very much, I hope you enjoyed the questions, I hope you enjoy the book, and contrary to some of ideas that are expressed, these tunes are really easy to learn, so get your chanter and start learning.

WG

The session has completely overrun, so what a poor chair I am. However I think that it has been well worthwhile, with some good information. I had some questions myself, but you have given all the answers. I enjoyed the playing of your piper, so thank you Jenny.

It brings back memories of the biannual dinner and piobaireachd night at the Royal Scots club. People seem to be playing in a relaxed environment, playing tunes they are actually enjoying.

CM

This year's dinner is on 27th August. The players are Callum Beumont, Iain Speirs, Greig Wilson, Innes Smith, and Roddy MacLeod. The judge will be Bill Livingstone from Ontario.

WG

The book is not a table top book, it looks as if it will be very useful.

Again thank you very much Colin. I would say that it has been a great presentation.

