

Campbell Canntaireachd Settings of Well Known Tunes by Jack Taylor

Chair Derek Fraser

The final speaker needs little introduction to members of the Piobaireachd Society. Most people know Jack's background. He was originally taught by Bert Barron in St Andrews and he went on to study Piobaireachd with the great Robert Brown and Robert Nicol, the legendary Bobs of Balmoral.

He was President of our Society for twelve years, helping to lead the organisation to a new area of new publications and modern composition. He continues to be in high demand as a teacher and judge around the world.

Jack is going to be taking us through some well-known tunes from the Campbell Canntaireachd. Jack disappeared for a few minutes there. I was quite convinced that he was going to turn up with the third volume of the Campbell Canntaireachd and present it to Perth Museum.

Jack Taylor

Thanks very much Derek.

Continuing the theme of local welcomes. I'm not an Aberdeenshire man really, but I have lived there for many years, so I will say Fit Like? And you will say....nae bad...fit like yersel'

It is a real pleasure to be here. Hearing about the piping scene in North America takes me back to the days when I first went there. I saw the enthusiasm there was for piping in North America at that time. I met Mike Cusack. He remembers me, but I'm afraid I don't remember Mike, but it was at one of the summer schools I was involved with away back.

And the other North American theme is that they taught us to bring one of these things on stage (a towel). I have done that, but I have not brought the talcum powder.

Going back a few hundred years we are going to start with our first tune. It was composed in the 1500s/1600s. It is one of our most favourite tunes. Those of you who can read the words will know what it is.

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Those of you can't, won't. But hopefully when I play it in minute you will recognise it.

I should probably go back a little bit for those of you who don't know the Campbell Canntaireachd. He wrote the tunes out in words which evoked the singing of the piper. He worked out this wonderful system which evokes the singing, but which could be read.

There was a vowel sound for every note of the chanter, and there was a consonant sound for the gracenotes. So, high A I, high G i, F e softened to dhe or ve, E e, D a, C and B both o, low A en, low G em. A lovely simple system. If you want to put a G gracenote in front of it you simply add h.

He wrote this tune down. It is called One of the Cragich. That means that it is an irregular tune, probably. There are about eight of these tunes with that title. It is an irregular tune. It is a very favourite tune and it is one that is taught often early on in the piper's career, but it is an advanced piece of music.

What Campbell did with this ground was to regularise it a little bit. You'll probably know the ground of the tune. It is a bit irregular. Beautiful, but irregular as it was written out by Angus MacKay. The way Campbell wrote it out, he made it a bit more regular.

For those who don't read the Canntaireachd, here is the score.

SLIDE

Jack Taylor plays the ground of One of the Cragich (Lament for Donald of Laggan) as written by Colin Campbell.

Donald of Laggan as written out by Colin Campbell. The rest of the tune is exactly the same as we know it. If you look at the document he makes reference to the fact that you can play the second line either as the second line or the third line. So he obviously recognises that it is a bit of a lopsided tune.

Donald of Laggan – of Glengarry. I didn't know that until I read it. He had associations with Glengarry. He lived to be 102. He had a son, called Alexander. Who was Alexander?

Yes, Alexander Dearg, or Alasdair Dearg. Alasdair with the red beard of Glengarry. Colin Campbell got this tune too. He wrote it again a bit

differently to the way we have become accustomed to hearing it. He adds a thumb variation which is attractive. In the variations he changes the last line to make it less of a finishing line and more of a line which kind of hangs because it finishes on C as opposed to a B.

So I will play the ground and the thumb variation of what Campbell called Glengarries March.

SLIDE

Jack Taylor plays the ground and thumb variation of of Glengarries March as written by Colin Campbell.

Now to the tune that most pipers who don't know anything about Piobaireachd know something about. Probably most musicians, Scots musicians, Gaelic musicians generally it is the tune which people most associate with Piobaireachd.

It was composed by the grandson of the composer of the first tune. It was the only tune he composed. It is said that he had a premonition. The premonition was that he was going to be killed at the Rout of Moy. And so he was, killed at the Rout of Moy. The only soldier on the government's side to be killed there. By one of the six riflemen put out by the lady of the house where Prince Charlie was staying to fend off the Government troops.

Of course that piper was Donald Ban MacCrimmon. He composed MacCrimmon Shall Never Return. And that is the one which most non pipers know, and one curiously enough few Piobaireachd players, although it is an attractive tune.

Campbell had a slightly different setting of it to the one which was written out by Angus MacKay which is the one we normally hear and see.

The score that I am putting up is the one which is in the Kilberry book, which is Angus MacKay's score. That will let you hear and see the differences. And it will also allow me to make any mistakes I like.

SLIDE

Jack Taylor plays part of MacCrimmon Shall Never Return as written by Colin Campbell.

Yes, I think it is rather beautiful.

Now two tunes which are set for this year, of which Campbell has different variations. The first is Clan Chattan, the Gathering tune Clan Chattan. The normal we we hear it is with a lovely ground with the gathering call, then a series of variations. Quite a number of variations. And they are very good variations.

What Campbell did with the tune was that he had the ground more or less as we know it. Again he puts in a thumb variation, with perhaps some musical surprises. Certainly in the variation after that there is a distinct musical surprise. It reminds me a bit of Hadyn's Surprise Symphony. You get something that you are just not expecting. He then gives the first variation as we know it. Sings. Then the tune finishes there with Campbell.

So here is Clan Chattan.

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Jack Taylor plays part of the Colin Campbell setting of The Gathering of Clan Chattan.

So that lets you hear what happens in Clan Chattan. When that D comes in, it is quite striking. Whether you like it or not is a matter of taste, but he obviously meant it. The D does not appear anywhere else in the tune.

The Blue Ribbon, as we heard from Alan on Wednesday night, has thirteen variations. Campbell has thirteen variations too. But his variations are different to what MacKay wrote. I think overall that the way MacKay is superior, because Campbell misses out the more attractive variations I think. Sings.

Campbell has a Taorluath Braebach. He doesn't do the same with it as MacKay. He doesn't have that little run towards the end of the lines.

SLIDE

You can see what he did in the thumb. I'll also then play his Crunluath Braebach which isn't in Angus MacKay. I'll try and move straight from that if I can to the Crunluath a Mach as written out by Colin Campbell. What people don't realise so much about Campbell and his Crunluath a Machs is that when he wrote the Crunluath a Mach on D he started it on E.

Chehadre.

Jack Taylor plays part of The Blue Ribbon as written by Colin Campbell.

Now I'll skip the next two tunes for playing. I'll just talk briefly about them.

The next two I'd wanted to mention are Dunyveg and Dungallon.

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That is how Castle of Dunyveg is written out in the Piobaireachd Society score. It is a bonny wee tune. What Campbell did with this tune was in the middle phrase of the second line, which as you can see is pretty well the same as the end phrase of the first line. It ends on a B, as opposed to a low A. What Campbell did was something like this. Sings. So a complete new middle phrase. Then back to. Sings.

Then Campbell has another variation following the ground which you might call a thumb. But really it is more than a thumb, it is a completely different variation. It is only found in Campbell.

So as you see it goes completely bananas. Sings. It is fantastic fun to play. It is really great. Then Campbell finishes the tune there. There is no reason I don't think that you couldn't just add the normal variations. And I would say that you have licence to change the middle of the second line in the variations to match what is played in the ground. It might cause some frowning and scratching of heads amongst judges, but so long as you told them.

SLIDE

Dungallon is the next one. That's the score as written out by the Piobaireachd Society. What Campbell does is that at the in the first line he switches a B to a C. And in the second line he changes the middle phrase. Sings. In the last line he changes the ending quite significantly. Sings. Again this makes an attractive alternative to the setting of Dungallon.

Now I'll go on to the last tune. This is Queen Anne's Lament. You might say it is related to Donald of Laggan in a way. Because Queen Anne came on to the throne in 1603, well the throne of the United Kingdom. She had been the wife of King James the Sixth of Scotland until that day. In fact it was in 1603, not on this day, but tomorrow, that she went on to the throne.

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Queen Anne's Lament. It is a very bonny piobaireachd. We don't know so much about where it came from or who it was composed by. But, the ground as Angus MacKay wrote it is irregular. It is hard to make good music from it. There has been speculation about whether he wrote it down correctly or not.

A particular item is that at the end of the last line there is a hiharin stuck in there. It doesn't really fit with the rest of the medley. It is speculated that he put that in just to make up the numbers.

SLIDE

What Colin Campbell did – as you can see his on the other side – he actually made the ground into three even lines, but he managed to avoid having the hiharin on the end. It is quite attractive.

I'll play that, and if I can I will play the next variation – much as Angus MacKay. Then, over the page you will see that he has another couple of which aren't anywhere else. I think that they are attractive.

Jack Taylor plays part of Day Yesterday, Here Yesterday (Queen Anne's Lament) from Colin Campbell's Manuscript.

Thank you very much. I am happy to take any questions or discussion points.

Robert Wallace Jack are these tunes in the book, Pipers Meeting?

JT No. The Pipers Meeting book contains tunes that hadn't been previously put into staff notation, which were't anywhere else, including the Piobaireachd Society notes. They are referred to in the Piobaireachd Society notes, but they hadn't been put into staff notation.

Many of these are now on the Piobaireachd Society website. And, as the books change over, they are being added to the books. Where the book may have the Canntaireachd words, which most people can't read or understand, they will have the score there.

Derek Fraser So these scores are being added to the Piobaireachd Society's books?

JT Yes they are. I think we have more than half a dozen now.

Robert Wallace The other thing Jack is that I've never heard the pipes sounding so well, and clearly down to the new Piobaireachd Society cover and cords.

JT It's that Rab.

RW They just have thar ring. If you haven't got them guys come on!

DF Just think what they would sound like if he had the cuff links as well.

Graham Mulholland You mentioned that in Campbell the crunluath a mach on D comes from E. It is like that in MacArthur as well. Is that consistant throughout the Campbell Canntaireachd?

JT It is consistent throughout the Campbell Canntaireachd. Every single time there is a Crunluath amach, which he calls a Strulive, it is *che ha dre*.

GM Would some players have played off a B, and some off an E?

JT I don't know. At that time obviously we don't know. But he must have heard players playing it. He was a player himself. His son was a good player who came to the competitions, who brought the Campbell Manuscript to be looked at, and his father had been to MacCrimmon. So all that suggests that he had heard it somewhere, and he decided to write that in every tune. It is always with the E starting note.

John Forbes You mentioned at the start that it is hard to distinguish between a B and a C. Would you like to comment on that?

JT He used the vowel O for both B and C. So, if it is a plain B or a plain C in a tune you really have to know from the context of the tune whether it is going to be a C note or a B note. If there is a gracenote in front of it he makes it easy because a C with a gracenote is *ho* and a B with a gracenote is *hio*. So it is easy that way. And with a grip C is *dro* and B is *tro*.

JF Are there any circumstances where it is difficult to tell whether it is a B or a C?

JT I don't think so. I can't think of a tune. If you think of the tune we just did, Dungallon we played a C, so it was clearly a C he wrote. Whether there was a gracenote in front of it I couldn't tell you.

John Frater I can't remember which tune it was where you had some wee run-downs. That's discretionary, or is it in the Canntaireachd?

JT That is purely in the Canntaireachd. So in Donald of Laggan it starts *hiharin hio din* in the first line. Now *hio din* can have a cadence, it often is given one. But in the repeat of the line it clearly has that little thing I did - *hiharin eaea hio din* – he clearly writes that.

JF I was thinking about the FD..

JT That was in Alasdair Dearg. Yes, again it is discretionary how you play these, but they are written clearly. It seemed that the only way to fit them into the melody was to make them that configuration.

DF Jack, it was a really interesting and informative talk. Thank you very much. I think we really appreciate Jack coming along with his knowledge, experience and expertise, and sharing it with us. It is just fabulous. Thanks again Jack.

I should have said right at the beginning that Jack is the Music Editor, sits on the Music Committee and continues to do an enormous amount of work for the Piobaireachd Society. We are really grateful for that.