

THE PLAYING OF THE LEUMLUTH, TAORLUTH AND CRUNLUTH BEATS *continued.*

The tendency, in these times, is to consider the opinions only of those who may have risen to the front rank in competition playing. Is this attitude justifiable? It should be realised that fine fingering and good expression, which makes the "Champion" Piper, is mainly the natural aptitude of one fond of the music, having dexterous fingers rendered perfect by regular practice. It does not necessarily follow that such a player is an authority on matters appertaining to Piobaireachd; far from it, for few of our fine players of to-day have any claim to such a title, and fewer, possibly, would claim it. Therefore we should realise there are others, who may not stand in the first rank of pipers, although perhaps as soundly taught, and others, not pipers at all, who may, nevertheless, be keen students of the music, whose opinion is worthy of respect and consideration.

Therefore, the most logical view to take would seem to be that giving preference to the evidence of those *still living* who were directly taught by these "old masters." In short, it would appear the evidence of Mr. Farquharson, *directly taught* by Duncan Campbell, Donald Cameron and John Ban Mackenzie, and the evidence of Mr. Simon Fraser, *directly taught* by Peter Bruce, are much more valuable than the evidence of those who were taught, not by these "old masters" themselves, but by their *pupils*. In addition, we have Mr. Farquharson's personal testimony that Colin Cameron, son of Donald, played the A. In Mr. Fraser's case we have the further testimony of the Canntaireachd vocables he learnt from Peter Bruce, and Peter Bruce is hardly likely to have taught such vocables if he did not play the A himself. The "drin" is clearly the middle A with the grip.

It should not be overlooked that a little carelessness, either on the part of the teacher or his pupil, might easily lead to the *omission* of the A, but the same carelessness is *not likely to result in the production of a redundant note*.

On the subject of traditional playing, would not an impartial judge (if there is such a thing in Piobaireachd matters!), with the above points before him, be more likely to decide in favour of the middle note than against it? There is little doubt he would at least recognise the point an open one, possibly more in favour of the middle note.

MACDONALD AND MACKAY'S METHOD OF WRITING THE BEAT WITH THE MIDDLE NOTE WAS, PERHAPS, FOR THE BENEFIT OF PLAYERS ON OTHER INSTRUMENTS (Point 2).—This argument is far from convincing, and indeed surprise might be expressed that such a reason should be put forward at all. It savours rather of straining the point to the utmost. However, assuming there *might* be something in the point, why do MacDonald and MacKay, in their illustrated "Instructions," show the beats with the middle note? These instructive illustrations were not put forward for others than those playing the "Great Highland Bagpipe," even if the tunes themselves were.

DONALD MACDONALD'S AND ANGUS MACKAY'S METHOD OF WRITING THE BEATS (Points 3 and 6).—Is it a legitimate argument that because MacKay's beat from D shows no middle A his beats from other notes are wrongly written? Could it not be said the exception proves the rule? It is surely recognised by all students of Piobaireachd that the D is a difficult note from which to play. Is not this irregularity very apparent in the Mach beats from D? How are they written to-day? Does not this irregularity justify some exception in the closed beat? On the other hand, there are players who do not play the closed beat from D as written by MacKay, but to the middle A, using B grace note in the grip in place of the D used in the grips in the other beats. It will be noticed the beat is written this way by MacDonald.

MacDonald was a pioneer in transferring the music to staff notation and, in these days when practically nothing but staff notation is understood, and Canntaireachd is practically dead, the greatest credit is due to him for his work. Allowing for various clerical errors and omissions apparent in his book, it is difficult to believe that MacDonald adopted his method of writing these beats because he could not write them as played, *if they were played in a manner different to his writing*.

There can be little doubt that impartial judges, viewing MacDonald's and MacKay's writing *as a whole*, would come to the conclusion the beats were written as played, the D beat being possibly wrongly written by MacKay, or else played in a different way by him.

THE BEAT WITH THE A CANNOT BE PLAYED IN TIME (Point 4).—This argument would appear to have arisen in consequence of some comment on

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



a recently published Tutor dealing with *Band Music* (pipes and drums), wherein it is stated the Taorluth beats containing a middle note cannot be played in time. It is probable the beat, if played in a March in exactly the same time as played in a Piobaireachd, would upset the time of the March. Its length alone would do this. Because the "small music" is the predominant music of the pipes to-day it does not follow that certain beats belonging to the "great music" are to be played in Piobaireachd to conform to the "time" necessitated by a March. So far as Piobaireachd is concerned, and we are dealing only with the "Great Music," it is perfectly clear the question of time has no bearing whatsoever on the question at issue. It does not matter how many "syllables" a beat may contain, whether Leumluth, Taorluth or Crunluth, for each beat of its own class would, of course, be played in the same time.

THE TAORLUTH FOSGAILTE BEAT (Point 7). Has this beat any relation to the ordinary Taorluth beat? Is it not perhaps the parent of it? If so, why should there be three notes in the Fosgailte and only two in the beat with the grip? Surely the only difference between these two is that the Fosgailte beat is "open," i.e., the chanter is not closed, whereas the other form introduces the grip *in place of the D cut*. The Fosgailte beat strongly supports the middle A in the closed beat.

THE BEATS FROM LOW G ARE FOLLOWED BY A (Point 8). This point is one not brought out in the recent discussion and is one strongly in support of the A. Why, if there is no middle A, does the low G Taorluth beat contain two A's, even though the latest fashion of writing it shows the middle A as a grace note? Students of Canntaireachd will appreciate that, as a three syllable beat, the old way of writing it, as on the left, is better than the new. The modern school, *to be consistent*, should write the beat as on the right, with the centre note G instead of A, but they do not do so!

THE FOOTNOTE ON PAGE 148 OF ANGUS MACKAY'S COLLECTION (Point 9). The footnote is as follows:—

"The 2d Quaver in each Triplet is held while the 2d and 3d fingers perform the small notes throughout the two last Variations, always taking care that

the one finger is down before the other is taken up; by that means one move of the finger performs two notes; if the 2d Quaver should be A in the first instance it gives  by moving or raising the 3d finger, then the 2d four notes if the 2d Quaver should be C  it gives  if D  this  if B  thus  etc.

From the Original MSS. in possession of the Highland Society of London."

The "two last variations" in MacKay's version are Doubling and Trebling of Crunluth, the last being what is known to-day as a "Mach" Variation. It is fairly well known that the MacArthur MS. was written on the staff in a manner different to present-day practice, and MacKay no doubt "transposed" MacArthur's notes and raised their position on the staff to conform to the method used throughout his book. Assuming, therefore, that the illustrations in the footnote were correctly "transposed," they are none the less valuable.

The use of the word "triplets" seems to have confused some, one correspondent to the *Oban Times* going so far as to say the footnote must refer to the Taorluth Fosgailte Variation. The word is not hard to understand when we compare the grace notes in the footnote with the corresponding notes in the music itself.

All MacKay's Crunluth beats throughout his book are written as four syllable beats (the Breabach beats having two notes added, making six). The inference is, therefore, that MacArthur's Crunluth beats were three syllable ones, and that MacKay wrote them in four syllables to agree with the other beats in his book, but did not change the footnote to correspond.

The point is easily settled by reference to the original MS. The illustrations on the left make the point clear, the upper one being from the music as written by MacKay and the lower example based on the footnote under discussion. It will be noticed the lower beat becomes a "triplet," in the somewhat poor phraseology of the writer of the footnote.

The recent discussion in the *Oban Times* shows a lamentably narrow view of this "triplet" question. No allowance whatever is made

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for the date of the footnote, nor for the fact that pipers of that time had not the intimate knowledge of staff notation terms which is common to-day. Nevertheless, is the word "triplet" so absolutely incorrect, viewed in a broadminded spirit, when evidence is produced to show that in the old days such a beat would have been played giving equal time value to the three melody notes? (See notes on the Crunluth beats in the pages dealing with MacCrimmon Canntaireachd.)

It is perfectly clear from the footnote, read with intelligence, that the "2d Quaver" is the disputed A in the "Doubling of Crunluth," and the corresponding themal note in the Mach Variation, the "Trebling of Crunluath." This point is equally valuable even were the original MS. noted by John MacGregor!

CLOSED BEATS (FROM E, F, ETC.), IN CRUNLUTH FOSGAILTE VARIATIONS (Point 10). The practice to-day, even with "champion" players, is to rush the second note of the Crunluth Fosgailte beat. This note is a themal note and should be distinctly heard. In Gesto's Canntaireachd the Fosgailte

beat is a four syllable one, as shown on the left, but there is also a *three* syllable form, as shown on the right. Now,

whichever way the beat is played, whether as a three or a four syllable one, the closed beats (from E, F, etc.), in such variations should be played with the same number of syllables. If therefore the three syllable method is adopted what is left after deducting the E at the end of the beat? In the Fosgailte beat we have the two themal notes left, in the closed beat we have the initial note and—what, the A? (*Vide* illustrations on right.) In short, there must be, in the closed beat, a second syllable or note to correspond to the second themal note of the Fosgailte beat.

CANNTAIREACHD AND THE MACH BEATS (Point 11). What is the difference between the closed Taorluth beats and the "Mach" or open beats? Surely only the fact that the Mach beat is played on the initial note all through, whereas the closed beat comes to the A.

Some argue that the Mach beat has no relation to the closed beat! Surely no really serious student of Piobaireachd could accept such an

argument? They are companion beats and the difference, in modern practice at least, is in three beats only, those on B, C, and D (in the old days the Taorluth Mach beats went further up the scale), the other beats being common to both styles of Variations, closed and "Mach."

The late Iain MacLennan in the Scales in "The Piobaireachd as MacCrimmon played it" (page 1), gives Crunluth Mach beats from G to D, written two ways, the old and the new, both showing the middle note. In the beat on A the middle note is of course A also. One can very safely argue that if he wrote the A beat in a "Mach" Variation, with the middle A, he could not omit it in the A beat in a closed variation, for the beats are the same! In his later work he changes his method of writing the Crunluth Mach beats, omitting the middle note, probably the logical sequence of his method of writing the closed beats.

The latest fashion of writing the Mach beat, possibly following MacLennan's style, is to omit the middle note, probably because it was considered logical to do so, having written the closed beat without a middle note. This, if the reason, amounts to an admission that the closed and Mach beats are related, but the logic prompting the omission of the middle note in Mach beats should have been applied the reverse way—i.e., the closed beat should have been written with the A, *because the Mach beat contains the middle note*. That the Mach beat contains the middle note is obvious to anyone conversant with Canntaireachd.

The Canntaireachd vocables for the Mach beats are—

<i>Taorluth</i>		<i>Crunluth</i>
Ho - dro - ho	(Gesto)	Ho - dro - ti - ri
Ho - dra - ha	(do.)	Ho - dro - to - ti-ri - ri
Ha - dra - ha	(do.)	
Hio - tro - eo	(Lether Lorn)	Hio - tro - dre
Ho - dro - eo	(do.)	Ho - dro - dre
Hio - tra - ea	(do.)	Hio - tra - dre

Notice the three "syllables" in the Taorluth beat, notice the italic vowels in both Taorluth and Crunluth and who can dispute the fact the "o's" mean B's (or C's) and the "a's" D's? No doubt some would

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argue, as they do in a similar way about staff notation, that the Canntaireachd vocables do not represent the beats as played. This argument may apply to staff notation in certain cases, where through habit a piper writes the middle A but does not play it, but it cannot possibly be applied to Canntaireachd.

The Piobaireachd Society admits the Taorluth Mach beat on D contains three notes, the middle note being D, for they write it as shown on the left. If the D beat has three notes why not the others and why



do they write the Mach beat on B as shown on the right, in spite of the three syllable Canntaireachd vocable they quote showing



three B's? They should, to be consistent, write the D beat as a *two* syllable one, *if they can!*

It is clear beyond question the Mach beat contains the middle note, Canntaireachd alone proving this, apart from the support given by the footnote on page 148 in MacKay.

As the Canntaireachd vocables for the closed beats contain the same number of syllables as do those for the Mach beats, and as a Mach variation contains many closed beats common to both variations, are we not logically justified in the assumption the closed beats contain the

middle note apart from the grip, the grip being present in both the closed and Mach forms?

On the whole, therefore, it would seem there is more *logical* argument (traditional methods included) in support of the middle note than against it.

In the recent controversy in the *Oban Times* one correspondent says that any piper who learns to play the beats with the middle note will never wish to play them otherwise. How true this is only those who play the middle note realise. One might go further, and advise pipers to play the "syllables" distinctly, and they will find they will never wish to play the beats otherwise. They will find there is a great deal in the point raised regarding Leumluth and Crunluth, that there is a play upon the A and its fifth, which is absent in the modern school's method of playing.

It looks rather as if an incorrectly played Taorluth has led, all through, to the alteration of other beats based on it, whereas had the Mach beats been carefully studied, especially with the help of the Canntaireachd vocables, and students worked *backwards* to the Taorluth beats, instead of *forwards* from them, these enthusiasts would to-day be pointing out the necessity of the middle note, rather than upholding the theory of its omission!