
The Great Highland Bagpipes

- History, Music and Pipers through 1746

By Gordon Kinnie © 2001

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PURPOSE

This paper is intended to provide a basic introduction to the history of the Great Highland Bagpipe and the styles of classical Highland music through the year 1746. Where historical information could be provided, I have listed some of the pipe tunes that predate 1746. I fully expect this list to grow as more information is found. My hope is that the reader enjoys the material and perhaps develops an increased interest in the history and music of this magnificent instrument.

PRE- HISTORY

The earliest reference to the bagpipe is from *Aristophanes*, a poet from Athens in the year 425BC. He describes the traditional enemies of Athens as blowing on a pipe with a bag of dog skin and a chanter made from bone.

A definitive reference to mention the bagpipes is from *Dio Chrysostom*, a Greek writer, in the year 100AD. The following is his passage that is presumed to refer to Nero (8AD): “They say that he can write, carve statues, play the aulos both with his mouth, and also with the armpit, a bag being thrown under it.” The “aulos” appears to be a type of early bagpipe.

Early in the 6th Century *Procopius*, a Greek historian, mentions that the bagpipe was the instrument of the Roman Infantry while the trumpet was used primarily in the Cavalry. To support this statement we look to a sculptured bronze found in Richborough Castle, Kent. The image is described as a Roman soldier in full marching order with bagpipes.

The bagpipes have existed in many forms and were found in Scotland, Ireland, Russia, Finland, Germany, France, Spain, and in many other places around the world. In each country the basic instrument was the same, a bag with a chanter and possibly one or more drones. Some of these pipes were mouth blown while others used a bellows attachment to supply the air.

ORIGINS IN SCOTLAND

Controversy surrounds the origins of the pipes in Scotland. Some assign it as a Roman importation, brought into Britain by the invading Roman Legions and then carried northward to Scotland. Others believe that the instrument came from Ireland as the result of colonization, the first in 120AD under *Cairbre Riada*, the second in 506AD under *Fergus Lorne*, and *Angus*, the sons of *Erc*. Either or both explanations may be correct, or the pipes may have been invented independently but speculation must be largely futile as the instrument is so ancient as to be beyond the means of establishing whether it was indigenous or not.

Early written history in Britain is scarce but both Chaucer and Shakespeare made reference to the pipes in their works. There are also several indirect references to the use of the pipes in England during the 14th Century, including pipers being employed in the English Navy.

Four centuries ago, when the bagpipe was played almost everywhere in Europe as well as in the courts of the most powerful monarchs, no one could have foreseen that the Highland Clan's Pìob Mhòr or "great pipe" was destined to become known world wide as the symbol of Scotland. The origins of the pipes in Scotland are clouded in time, but it is sufficient to say that the Highlanders were the ones to develop the instrument to its full extent and make it, both in peace and war, their national instrument.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PIPES IN SCOTLAND

Early records indicate that the pipes were in Scotland about the end of the twelfth century. These original pipes in Scotland probably had no drones, or at the most, a single drone. Some records and drawings exist indicating that a single drone was used prior to the 1500's and an entry from Scotland's Exchequer Rolls states that a payment was made to "English piper with the drone".

The second drone was added to the pipes in mid to late 1500's. A set of pipes do exist that have two drones and they are marked with the Roman date of MCCCCIX (1409), but most experts believe that these are Victorian Era fakes or at least the date is in error and should be 1709.

The third drone or the great drone came into use early in the 1700's. A painting of the piper to the Laird of Grant shows three working drones and is dated 1733. Some evidence suggests that the great drone was in use earlier and that the last drone to be added was the second tenor drone. This was disputed by *Joseph MacDonald* in his book "A complete Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe," written in 1760. He is quoted: "*Besides the smaller drones of the Highland bagpipe there was and still is, in use with pipers in the north highlands particularly, a great drone, double the length and thickness of the smaller, and the sound, just an octave below them, which adds vastly to its grandeur, both in sound and show.*" There are indications that the bass drone was not accepted throughout the Highlands. In the northern reaches and on some of the isles, pipers thought the Great Drone drowned out the true notes of the pipes. In 1822/23 the

Highland Society prohibited the playing of two drone pipes in competition and insisted on pipers using the three drone pipes.

Another important development in the Highlands was the use of the small pipes. Again from *Joseph MacDonald* we find “*through the reels and jigs peculiar to the pipes are in large companies as at weddings, etc. played to good effect on the Great Pipes. Yet, they have besides, through the Highlands in general a smaller bagpipe, complete, the same in form and apparatus with the greater, differing only in size and used for dancing music alone, although all other music peculiar to the instrument may also be played on it truly, though not so grandly as on the large pipes.*” Also the name “Great Highland Bagpipe” does in itself imply that there existed smaller pipes in the Highlands.

As for the materials used in the construction of the pipes we find that most of the early pipes were boxwood, but some were also made from holly, apple, plum and laburnum. Mounts were often pewter, horn or even lead. The Speckled Pipe at Dunvegan Castle, legend to have been played by Patrick Mor MacCrimmon, are ornate with carving and bands of horn in the wood in addition to the ferrules and rings. (The upper parts of each drone is supposed to be original) Most of these early pipes were produced on hand lathes but some may have been hand carved. The reeds were made from local canes. The use of blackwood, ebony, ivory and silver probably did not come into use until the 1780’s.

The primary advantage of the Great Highland Bagpipe is producing a much more martial effect than horns, trumpets or harps. Some of this can be attributed to the design of the Piob Mhor. A load chanter balanced with drones that harmonize and help to increase the sound while at the same time help to reduce the sharpness of the chanter.

EARLY RECORDED HISTORY IN SCOTLAND

In the Exchequer Rolls of 1362, a payment of forty shillings was “paid to the Kings Pipers.”

Notable is the carving of a pig playing the pipes on Melrose Abbey, most probably from the rebuilding after the English raids in 1385.

An inventory of instruments in St. James palace conducted in 1419 specifies “four bagpipes with pipes of ivory” and another “bagpipe with pipes of ivory, the bag covered with purple velvet.”

In 1486, Edinburgh rejoiced in a band consisting of three pipers, and any household who declined to billet these “city musicians” in rotation was liable to be fined nine pence in accordance with a town council decree.

It is not a little surprising that in the accounts of the Lords High Treasurers of Scotland there is a reference to pipers being “INGLIS.” In the years 1489 and 1491

payments were made to “the English piper that came to the castle and played to the King,” and to “four English Pipers.”

On October 6, 1503 an entry was made to record the King’s payment of 28 shillings to the pipers of Aberdeen and Edinburgh.

In 1505, records exist indicating that Dumbarton, Biggar, Wigton, Glenluce and Dumfries had public pipers.

The complete disappearance of any payments to pipers after the year 1508 may indicate that the bagpipe had ceased to be popular in the royal court of Scotland but as late as 1536 pipes were still employed at Roman Catholic services in Edinburgh.

During 1556, the Queen Regent made a pilgrimage in honor of St. Giles and was accompanied by bagpipes and other musicians.

In 1581, a payment was made “to a piper and young boy his son that play in Dalkeyth upon Sunday the 11 Day of June from the Kirk to the Castle before his Highness.”

Presbytery records for Stirling, 1582, show the summoning of pipers William Wricht and Thomas Edmane before the Kirk for censure and fines. They played the pipes on the Sabbath at a wedding.

The first written mention of the “Great Pipes” was in 1623 when a piper from Perth was prosecuted for playing on the Sabbath.

In the Scottish Lowlands, pipers formed part of the municipal institutions of all large towns. In Jedburgh the office of piper was a hereditary one.

It was noted that in 1650, MacLeod of Dunvegan had a bard, a harper, a piper and a fool, all of which were provided for by the Chief.

The records of the Burgh of Aberdeen, for 1664, contain an entry that granted Alexander Thomson the liberty to go through town playing his pipes and that he would receive payment as others in like employment had before.

In Brechin, a small town between Dundee and Aberdeen, the town piper’s duties were to pipe up and down the town streets each weekday at five in the morning and seven at night. In 1688, this official was assigned a salary of ten merks yearly.

The Inverness Kirk Session records between 1688 and 1695 mention William Fraser, piper to Lord Lovet, as having paid four pounds Scots of a penalty for “doing what he ought not have done.”

An advertisement in the *Edinburgh Courant* in 1708, asked for “any person that plays on the bagpipes who might be willing to engage on board a British man-of-war.” Both British and Dutch ships were anchored in Leith Roads at the time.

The pipes became popular in the Highlands in the 1400’s and came into general use before 1500. The Highlanders labors were often accompanied by music, either vocal that of the harp and when occasion allowed the pipes. In 1565 George Buchanan indicates that the harp and the pipes were in use throughout the Highlands. The decline of the harp occurred during the 1600’s as the pipes moved into the position as the instrument of the highland clans.

DEVELOPMENT OF PIPE MUSIC

While bagpipes were played throughout Europe prior to 1700’s, no music has come close to the *Piobaireachd* in style and composition. Even in Scotland the differences in musical abilities are immense. In the Lowlands of Scotland, pipers occupied well-defined positions as town pipers, performers for weddings, feasts and fairs. There was no recorded “master piper” nor was there any pipe schools. Lowland pipers played songs and dance music, as was expected by their audience, so no effort was made to produce great music.

During this same time in the same area of Europe, separated only by mountains and glens were pipers of a different caliber. These pipers were strongly influenced by their background of the Celtic legends and the wild nature that is the Highlands. The Highland piper occupied a high and honored position within the Clan system. To be a piper was sufficient, if he could play well than nothing else would be asked. Most of the early history and songs associated with this instrument come from this small area in the north of Scotland.

As the Bagpipe slowly left center stage throughout Europe a new form of music was starting in the Highlands. For over three hundred years one family was to dominate piping in Scotland. The MacCrimmon were responsible for elevating Highland pipe music to a new level – *piobaireachd*.

PIOBAIREACHD

The music of the pipes is ancient and has passed through a long evolution process, but has changed little since it was committed to paper.

Music in the Highlands is divided into two types, each known in Gaelic as *Ceol Mor* for Great Music and *Ceol Beag* for small music. As the Highland Bagpipes are *Piob Mhor* and a piper is *Piobaire*, *Piobaireachd* in Gaelic simply means piping. But in the course of time *Piobaireachd* (pronounced P’broch) has come to stand for the great classical music of the Bagpipes.

Ceol Beag existed before the beginnings of Piobaireachd. Most of these tunes are believed to have been simple, short and repetitive. The harp being an ancient instrument and popular in the Highlands suggest that some of early pipe tunes probably originated from harp music or from mouth music as the pipes began to be played when groups worked. Dances such as reels and jigs and early Clan gathering tunes made up the early music for the Highland Bagpipes.

Piobaireachd is not easy to define or sometimes to describe; it has been called the voice of uproar and the music of real nature and rude passion. Many Highlander Pipers believed that the pipes could actually speak and that piobaireachd is an extension of the tales told by Bards to remember the clan's history. It is the specialty of the Highland Bagpipes as no other instrument can produce the emotional response that the pipes do when playing Piobaireachd.

Each piobaireachd tune was composed for a particular purpose. Some recent studies have broken piobaireachd down into the following types: Gatherings, Marches, Laments, Salutes and other titled tunes. The idea that the individual notes of the chanter take on meaning has been proposed several times.

Low G	note of Gathering
Low A	Piper's note
B	note of challenge
C	most musical note
D	note of Battle
E	Echoing note
F	note of Love
High G	note of sorrow
High A	Piper's note

In the days before written music, Piobaireachd was composed and taught by using a sort of "unintelligible jargon" known as Canntaireachd. The use of the syllables allowed the pipers to train their pupils with out the aid of any scales or other notations. This verbal system was used to convey both the tune and the emotion of the music and is far better than modern day written notation.

The basic structure of Piobaireachd consists of an air with variations on the theme. The ground is the basic theme and is normally played slowly and is often the most interesting part of the music. Some grounds are made up of short repeat phrases while others are free flowing, but most are based on the pentatonic scale. Often the ground is followed by variations that are always simple and increase in complexity with each more difficult to play than the previous.

These variations on the ground can include:

1. Doubling.
2. Trebling
3. Thumb variation
4. Diths
5. Diths doubling
6. Throw
7. Leumluath
8. Leumluath doubling
9. Taorluath
10. Taorluath doubling
11. Taorluath a mach
12. Crunluath
13. Crunluath doubling
14. Crunluath a mach

In concluding variations the composers ingenuity and the pipers capability are tested. The piobaireachd ends with a return to the slow and impressive ground and the whole tune can take between ten to twenty-five minutes. Currently the ground is played at the beginning and the end of a tune only, in the past the ground was played at intervals in the tune, often played between doublings of variations and the subsequent singling of the next variation.

There is evidence of a variation even greater in complexity than the crunluath, called the barludh. According to Joseph MacDonald it consisted of eighteen gracenotes after the theme note and finished on high G. Thankfully Patrick Og phased this out as an unmusical fancy.

PIPERS IN THE HIGHLANDS

The pipes in the Lowlands seemed to flourish until the time of the Reformation, when the playing of the bagpipes as well as any musical instrument were classified as sinful by the Calvinists. The use of the pipes greatly discontinued in the Lowlands while the Highlands, largely unaffected by Lowland politics, became the stronghold for bagpipe music.

There are many references at the close of the 16th Century to the prevailing custom of a piper being considered an indispensable member of the Clan Chief's establishment. The pipes were played in the great halls to mark special occasions for both the Chieftain and the clan while they were also used to mark the passing of noted kinsmen during the procession to the final resting place.

A good example of the retinue for a Highland Chief is given in the book "Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London" written in 1726. The following is quoted from letter XXI:

“When a chief goes a journey in the hills, or makes a formal visit to an equal, he is said to be attended by all or part of the following, viz

<i>The Henchmen</i>	<i>basically a bodyguard</i>
<i>Bard</i>	<i>his poet</i>
<i>Bladier</i>	<i>his spokesmen</i>
<i>Gillie-more</i>	<i>carries his broadsword</i>
<i>Gillie-casflue</i>	<i>carries him across streams when on foot</i>
<i>Gillie-comstraine</i>	<i>leads his horse in rough and dangerous areas</i>
<i>Gilly-trushanarnish</i>	<i>the baggage man</i>
<i>Piper</i>	<i>who being a gentleman, I should have mentioned him sooner</i>
<i>Piper’s Gilly</i>	<i>carries the bagpipes”</i>

In the same letter he further describes the Piper; *“I have had occasion to say something of the piper, but not as an officer of the household. In the morning, while the Chief is dressing, he walks backward and forward, close under the window without doors, playing on his bagpipes, with the most upright attitude and majestic stride.*

It is a proverb in Scotland, viz ‘The stately step of a piper’. When required, he plays at meals, and in an evening is to divert the guests with his music, when the Chief has company with him: his attendance in a journey, or a visit, I have mentioned before.”

PAYING THE PIPER

It is understood that Clan pipers would often be rewarded with rent-free land in return for the services provided the Chieftain and the Clan. Exact records as to how much the pipers were paid by Clan chiefs are difficult to find, but some examples do exist.

The oldest reference is not to a payment but simply and offer of payment made to Angus Dubh MacAuthur, piper at the time to MacDonald of Islay, in the mid 1600’s. It is on record that Angus was offered a bonnet full of silver and gold if he would change his name to MacDonald. He refused the offer and sometime after this moved to Skye to and became the hereditary piper to the McDonalds.

In the MacLeod’s rental roles of 1664 there is a note of rent due by Patrick Mor MacCrimmon for Galtrigall. The amount due was 151.16 pounds Scots. This rent was cancelled by what MacLeod owed MacCrimmon for his service as piper.

Sometime the payments were also in the form of clothes or pipes. In 1711 MacLeod made a purchase of two bagpipes for 21.45 pounds Scots. (Today’s equivalent almost \$3000.00) And in 1714, payment was made to Pat Morrison of Edinburgh for “livery clothes for MacCrimmon, MacLeod’s piper”. The sum of this payment was 57 pounds Scots.

Charles MacAuthur, son of Angus, was paid 59.6 pounds Scots in 1720 for service to MacDonald of Skye. In 1729, MacAuthur accompanied his young Chief to St. Andrews when the Chief was attending university and was paid about 65 pounds Scots.

In 1732, Donald Ban, second piper to MacLeod after his brother Malcolm, received a payment of 26 pounds Scots and this had risen to 33 by 1738.

Now we will mention the famous Fraser Indenture, from about 1740. A written agreement whereby David Fraser was to serve Lord Lovat for seven years on condition that he was sent to learn the pipes from Malcolm MacCrimmon on Skye. He was to be given about 35 pounds Scots per year and also receive bed, board and cloths. If David made it to Skye the rising of 1745 would have interrupted his studies, as he is known to have been at Prestonpans, Falkirk and Culloden fighting for the Stuarts.

These Clan pipers were mostly hereditary and held in much esteem. The best known were the MacCrimmons, pipers to MacLeod of Dunvegan; the MacAuthers, pipers to MacDonald of the Isles; the MacKays, pipers to the MacKenzie; the Rankins, pipers to MacLearn of Duart; the MacGregors of Glenlyon.

THE MACCRIMMON

The MacCrimmon family is primarily responsible for evolving Highland Bagpipe music from a fairly uncomplicated movement consisting of a few variations to the complex structure of known today as piobaireachd. This classical music is an art form, which can compare to the music of any other country. It is remarkable that most of it was composed a hundred years before the pianos invention and without any form of written notation.

It would be difficult to ever know where the family MacCrimmon came from but a few theories do exist. Some believe that they came from Ireland. The links between the two countries were strong and the distance is not great. In 1595, Rory Mor MacLeod went to Ireland to fight for the O'Donnells. It is said that MacLeod brought back with him Iain Odhar MacCrimmon. But, there are no indications that Ireland had any form of music even remotely resembling piobaireachd.

Another possibility is that they came from the island of Harris. The MacLeods owned the Island and it is said that Patrick Og's wife was from there. It is also suggested that the family possessed lands on the island in the 12th century.

The most shocking theory is that the MacCrimmon came from Italy as suggested by Dr. MacLoad in 1841. The name itself may have been derived from the town of Cremona. This would suggest that MacLeod on a Grand tour of Europe may have heard an Italian piper of great ability and brought him back to Skye. The naming of a man by the name of where he came from is not uncommon in early Scotland. It has been suggested that some members of this family believed this to be their origin.

It does not matter where the MacCrimmons came from; it is sufficient to say they were responsible for the changing of pipe music forever.

The first in this great line is reported to be IAIN ODHAR and nothing much is known of this man except he may have laid out the very beginning of Piobaireachd. One of his sons was DONALD MOR (1570-1640), who led a wild and adventurous life as told in folk tales. He is the first in this long line of distinguished pipers to stand out and he may have had a small piping school at Galtrigall. Donald Mor was followed by his son PATRICK MOR (1595-1670). Patrick was a great composer of laments. His music was shaped by the tragic death of seven of his eight sons within a year. Now we bring in the founder of the piping collage at Boreraig, PATRICK OG (1645-1730). Patrick Og is considered one of the greatest pipers of all time, he is reputed to have been the best of the MacCrimmons. Patrick's eldest son MALCOM (1704-1760) succeeded him as teacher at Boreraig. His youngest son DONALD BAN (1710-1746) was killed near Inverness fighting for the loyalist against Prince Charles. IAIN DUBH was the last of the MacCrimmons to teach at Skye.

OTHER GREAT FAMILIES

To Talk of MacCrimmon we must also talk of the other hereditary pipers in the Highland during late 1600's and early 1700's.

The MacKay's were attached to the house of Gairloch. Blind Roderick was a distinguished piper and was accounted only to MacCrimmon in individual skill on the pipes. Roderick's son was Iain Dall MacKay, the blind piper known as "Am Piobaire Dall." He was born blind and learned the elements of music from his father. Sent to study at the Collage at Borreraig, he easily outstripped the other students and left after seven years, acknowledged as an equal by MacCrimmon. He composed no less than twenty-four Ceol Mor and numerous Ceol Beag. He was a good Gaelic poet, singer and authored many songs. (Unfortunately most of his tunes were lost.)

The MacArthur's, who were the Pipers to MacDonald of the Isles, were esteemed next in excellence to the MacCrimmons and like them kept a seminary for instruction of pipers. The most celebrated of the MacArthurs was Charles, who was taught by Patrick Og. He stayed at the Collage for Eleven years to master the instrument. Ian Dall said of him "I think a great deal of him, he is a good piper.... He will excel in his profession." Charles was an excellent teacher and his brother's son learned from him and became the appointed piper to the Highland Society in the late 1700's.

The Rankin's, a branch of MacLean, were the Pipers to their Chief. One of this line that was said to be a fine performer of first-rate abilities was Conn Dauly. He may have attended either collage on Skye but we can find no record to support that he did.

The Campbell's, who were the Pipers to Campbell of Mochaster in Argyleshire, attained considerable eminence in the field of piping. Donald was sent by Colin Campbell to learn from Patrick Og MacCrimmon. He remained with him for a considerable time and was esteemed a performer of merit.

At the college, students would devote between six and twelve years learning the Piobaireachd alone, for the playing of reels or quicksteps was not allowed.

PIPES AT WAR

As a musical instrument of war the PIOB MHOR is without equal. The shrill and penetrating notes worked well in the roar and din of battle. Pipes have reportedly been heard at distances over six miles, and under favorable conditions at ten miles. (I know for a fact that my pipes have been heard at a distance over two miles away.)

There is nothing improbable in the statement that the pipes were played at Bannockburn, in 1314, though historical evidence is not available to support the fact. Clan Menzies states that there pipers and bards urged the clans to victory at this battle.

At the great clan fight on the North Inch of Perth in 1396, “Clans stalked into the barriers to the sound of their great warpipes.” Clan Chatten maintains that their piper was wounded during the fight and after dispatching his foe gathered his pipes and played the clan to victory before succumbing to his wounds. The chanter he used became known as the “Black Chanter.”

It is said that at the Battle of Harlow in 1411 the Highland army charged to the sound of the pipes and in 1431, at the Battle of Inverlochy, the pipes were again in evidence.

It is on record that the piper of Jedburgh played his pipes in support of the Scottish Army at the battle of Flodden in 1513.

In 1549, a French military officer described a skirmish near Edinburgh in which the wild Scots “encouraged themselves to arms by the sounds of their bagpipes.”

In *George Buchanan's* “Description of Scotland,” published in 1582, it speaks of the Highlanders using bagpipes instead of trumpets on the field of battle.

Lord Lothian, in 1641, writes: “we are well provided of pipers. I have one for every company in my regiment, and I think they are as good as drummers.”

In 1651 at Stirling, a pageant was held in honor of Charles II. Acknowledged by his peers as the “Prince of Pipers”, Patrick Mor MacCrimmon was introduced to the King. MacCrimmon immediately composed and played for his monarch the Piobaireachd “Fhuair mi pog do laimh an Rìgh” (I got a kiss of the King’s hand). In September of the same year Patrick was taken prisoner at the Battle of Worcester, a misfortune he deplored in another piobaireachd.

It is interesting to note that the English did not appreciate the piper in the same way as the Scots. During the English Civil War, Cromwell issued a proclamation that anyone found playing the bagpipes would be banished to Barbados.

During Bonnie Prince Charlie's rebellion of 1745, it was the practice of the Highland Army to impress and carry along with them every man whom they discovered to be a piper. The music of their favorite instrument solaced the highlanders on many a weary march through Scotland and England. Prince Charlie had thirty-two pipers of his own, besides those belonging to the clans and he is reportedly to have entered Edinburgh at the head of a 100 pipers. It is beyond question that the music of the pipes cheered on the troops, but the most popular melody; "The King shall enjoy his own again" was composed by an Englishman.

The admiration that pipers held for the MacCrimmons is displayed by an incident that happened on the 23rd and 24th of December 1746. Loyalist forces marched into Aberdeenshire and skirmished near Inverarie with troops supporting Prince Charles. The Jacobite forces defeated the loyalists and took as a prisoner Malcom MacCrimmon. On the following morning a silence fell over the camp as none of the Jacobite pipers would play. When asked what was wrong, they responded that "while MacCrimmon was a captive their instruments would not sound." Malcom was released to return to Skye and the pipers resumed their normal duties.

The Highlanders on both sides during the Rebellion used the pipes. It is told that the Duke of Cumberland on leaving Nairn to meet the Prince's Army at Culloden had with him regiments from the Clans of Munro, Campbell and Sutherland. Observing the pipers carrying pipes the Duke said, "What are these men going to do with such bundles of sticks? I can supply them with better implements of war." His officer replied "Your Royal Highness cannot do so. These are the bagpipers, the Highlanders' music in peace and war. Wanting these, all others implements are of no avail, and the Highlanders need not advance another step for they will be of no service."

On the fateful day at Culloden Moor, above the shouts of battle, the clash of weapons and the howling of the blast, the shrill of the PÌOB MHOR could be heard calling the children of the gael to the slaughter: "THIGIBH AN SO! THIGIBH AN SO! CLANNAIBH NAN CON'S GHEIBH SIBH FEOIL!" (Come-hither! Come Hither! Children of the dogs, and you'll get flesh).

Owing to the importance of the bagpipes to any Highland Army, they were classified as an instrument of war by the Loyalist government. Those who carried the pipes were punished just the same as those who bore arms for Bonnie Prince Charlie. JAMES RIED, a piper who said he bore no arms against the English King, was tried at York for high treason. The court observed that "no Highland regiment ever marched without a piper and therefore his bagpipe, in the eyes of the law, was an instrument of warfare." James suffered death at York, on November 6th 1746.

CONCLUSION

This last reflection on the bagpipes and the Highlanders attitude is by an Englishman in 1679. He wrote “Music they have, but not the harmony of the spheres, but loud taurean noises, like the bellowing of the beasts; the loud bagpipe is their delight; stringed instruments are too soft to penetrate the organs of their ears, that are only pleased by sound of substance.”

What is heard in this sound of substance is a call to battle, a lament or the awakening of memories that recall a time lost and a land that will call to the heart of anyone with Highland blood.

HISTORY OF SOME HIGHLAND MUSIC

The following list of tunes is not complete, many more tunes in both Ceol Mhor and in Ceol Beag were composed prior to 1746 and have not been included. The MacCrimmons alone composed more piobaireachd than I have listed, but I have tried to include some history with each title and will be adding more titles as the reference material is located.

Ceol Mhor

War or Peace

Unknown date and composer but its simple, bold characteristic style indicates an ancient tune referring to the Highlands willingness to go to war but his preference for peace.

Piobaireachd Dhomhnuill Dubh

This call to arms was composed around the time of the Battle of Inverlochy in 1431. This tune is also known as “Lochiel’s March”. The Chief of the Cameron’s was MacDhomhnuill Dubh or son of Black Donald.

MacRae’s March

Composed to honor “Big Duncan of the Axe”. In 1491 Duncan is reputed to have killed no fewer than sixteen MacDonalds at the Battle of the Park.

MacIntosh’s Lament

To honor Lauchlan MacKintosh of Dunnachton, who was murdered by a close kinsman in 1526 during, troubled times for Clan Chatten.

Battle of Waternish

Celebrates a battle fought between the MacDonalds of Uist and the MacLeods. Written by Donald Mor in 1583.

MacLeods Controversy

Composed by Donald Mor in 1601 after the troubles between the MacLeods and the MacDonalds were resolved.

MacLeod’s Salute

Another tune composed by Donald Mor after the troubles on Skye had ended in 1601.

MacDonald’s Salute

A busy time for Donald Mor, this tune was composed to honor MacDonald when he came to talk with MacLeod in 1601.

The Cameron's Gathering

Composed sometime in the 1600's after a dispute between Ewen Cameron of Lochiel and The Earl of Atholl. The dispute was about rights to grazing lands near Rannoch.

Lament for Sir Rory Mor MacLeod

This great Chief died about 1626 and his piper, Patrick Mor composed this tune. One of the most feelings of all laments an excellent tune to honor his Chief.

The Mackay's Banner

In 1639 a dispute arose between Murdoch and Neil MacKay regarding the Chieftainship of the Clan. Murdoch was the rightful chief but Neil got possession of the Banner.

Lament for Alasdair Dearg MacDonnel of Glengary

Alasdair Dearg was son and heir of Donald MacDonald VIIth Chief of Glengarry. Alasdair predeceased his father, who died in 1645. Alasdair's sister was married to Rory Mor MacLeod, so it is possible that this tune is from MacCrimmon.

Pipers warning to his Master

Legend has it that in 1647 MacDonald's Piper composed a warning that indicated that the enemy had taken the castle. The legend continues that the Campbell realized what the piper had accomplished and had his fingers cut off.

Lament for the Children

Composed in 1650 by Patrick Mor after the loss of seven of his eight children within a year.

John Garbh of Rassay's Lament

Composed to honor John Garbh MacLeod who died in 1650 at the age of 21. He had been on Lewis visiting and was returning to Skye when a storm came up and he and his crew were lost.

Lament for Red Hector of the Battles

Also known as "Lament for Sir Hector Roy MacLean" written in 1651 by Patrick Mor.

I Got a Kiss of the Kings Hand

Gaelic "Fhuair mi pog do Laimh an Righ." Patrick Mor composed this tune after being presented to King Charles at Stirling in 1650.

Too Long in this Condition

Gaelic "Is Fade Mar So Tha Sinn" Two possible dates for this one. Either 1612 by Donald Mor or by his son Patrick in 1651 after the Battle of Worcester, where he was taken prisoner.

The Kings Taxes

Donald Mor wrote this piece to protest that his Chief had to put up 10,000 merks as security for the Clans good behavior.

Carles with the Breeks

Also known as Lord Breadlbanes March. Composed during the routing of the Sinclair's by the Campbell of Glenurchy's men near the river Wick in 1677.

Lament for the Viscount of Dundee

Composed to honor John Graham of Claverhouse, the Viscount of Dundee. He was killed leading the Jacobite forces at the battle of Killcrankie in 1689.

The Battle of Sheriffmuir

Finlay Dubh MacRae composed this tune after the well fought but indecisive battle of 1715.

The Earl of Seaforth's Salute

Another tune by MacRae, composed after the Earl went into exile and seems to express that he would return soon.

The Pretty Dirk

Composed by Patrick Og MacCrimmon about a dirk in the possession of MacLeod. The music so impressed MacLeod that he gave the dirk to Patrick.

Half Finished Piobaireachd

A joint composition by Patrick Og and Ian Dall.

Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon

Iain Dall MacKay composed this tune on hearing of his friend's death. Iain soon found that the rumors had been false and visited Boreraig to see Patrick. Patrick enjoyed the tune so much that he said, " I shall learn to play it myself."

Blind Pipers Obstinacy

Written by Iain Dall MacKay, the blind piper about 1730.

The Head of the High Bridge

Some say it was composed in the midst of the Battle of Inverlochy in 1427. Most probably composed after a skirmish with the British a few miles below Spean bridge prior to the raising of the standard at Glenfinnan in 1745.

The King has landed in Moidart

Composed by John MacIntyre in 1745 to celebrate the raising of Prince Charles standard at Glenfinnan.

Ceol Beag

The Sword Dance

This tune may have been composed on the harp about Malcom Canmore and the displeasure he created when the court moved from Dunstaffnage Castle in Argyllshire to Dunfermline after he married the Saxon Princess Margret.

Scots, Wha Hae

Originally called “Hey Tuttie Tattie.” Supposedly used by Bruce at Bannockburn on the 24th of June 1314. Also a popular reel called “The wind that shakes the Barley”.

We will take the Highway

Very old, said to originate around 1547. Believed to been played by Stewarts of Appin at Sheriffmuir in 1715. Also known as “Sheriffmuir March.”

Grant’s Rant

May have been known as “Cow thou me the Rashes” and “Green Grows the Rashes”, which would date it about 1549.

The King shall enjoy his own again

An English composition from the early 1600’s with words added by M Parker in 1643. This was a popular Jacobite tune during the 1745 raising.

The Flowers of the Forest

This common funeral tune was written as a Lament to the Scottish dead at the Battle of Flodden on 9 September 1513. The oldest known version of this tune dates from the 1620’s.

Reel of Tulloch

If the story that goes with the tune is believed than it was composed between 1550 and 1580 by John MacGregor after defending himself from several attackers.

All the Blue Bonnets over the Border

Very old tune which the third and forth parts come from the tune known in 1666 as “General Lesly’s March”

Up and Waur them All, Willie

This tune is said to date back to the 1689 Jacobite raising.

High Road to Linton

Possibly from before 1700. Linton is thought to be a corruption for “London”.

Lochaber No More

This tune was written before 1704 in honor of Ewan Cameron, Lochiel’s daughter.

The Campbell's are Coming

The dates for this tune are unknown but it was played as Argyll marched into Perth during the 1715 raising.

White Cockade

May have been composed around 1715, as it was old prior to Robert Burn's time.

Standard on the Braes of Mar

Commemorates the raising of the standard by John the Earl of Mar at Braemar on 6 September 1715.

Caber Feidh

Popular Gaelic song from the early 1700's that is disdainful of a cattle raid on the MacKenzie shielings by William Munro of Achany. Along with the cattle some cheese and butter was taken, it was this "petty larceny" that inspired this MacKenzie Clan song.

Highland Laddie

Originally the "Lass of Livingston" from the 1700's. The tune has been used with many sets of words ranging from Jacobite songs to Methodist Hymns.

Johnnie Cope

Written by Adam Skirving, a tenant farmer from East Lothian, in 1745.