

8 -- THE COMPLETED -- ?

# CONCISE TUTOR

Highland

FOR

Bagpipe

# PRACTISE CHANTER

The Canntaireachd and Pibaireachd of Domhnall Dubh

Donald Chalmers, Melbourne, Australia, 1973, and updated in blue, 2012

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1973

This booklet is dedicated to my three teachers and friends,  
who have all devoted themselves to the art and teaching of piping:—  
the late Messrs. John L. MacKenzie  
and William J. Wallace  
and Mr. Duncan MacLennan, MBE\*

## “INTRODUCTION”

This booklet has been written in the hope that it will satisfy what I see as a great need of learner pipers, particularly ‘ they are in the unenviable position of having to struggle along with no well qualified teacher to instruct them. If you have, well so much the better!

You will probably notice that this book is unlike the “College of Piping Tutor” in that I have written, and expect you to practice, graded “exercises”, as it is my belief that exercises must be learned and perfected first – tunes later.

It has not been possible in this booklet to show fingering positions on the practice chanter. It is expected that you will make use of other tutors for this purpose.

**DO NOT PROCEED FROM ONE EXERCISE OR LEARNING SECTION UNTIL YOU ARE QUITE SURE THAT YOU HAVE PERFECTED IT.**

I would like to thank Mr. Cyril Bell, Drumming Judge, for the use of his notes in the compilation of Section 1, [since my understanding of “timing” and of “time signatures” was then “basic”, and I was on a steep learning curve, as I tried to address the “issues” in a simple, progressive and “concrete” way.](#) Also referenced were the books by Spearritt, introduced to me by Alan W R McBean, 1RVR piper and drummer, and Drumming Judge with the VHPBA.

Remember, that it will take intelligence and diligent practice to take full advantage of a book of this nature.

It is my intention to produce, in the near future, an instructional tape recording which will follow the book, step by step, so that you can determine by listening (ie. in addition to following the instructions herein ), if you are playing correctly or not.

As I hope to publish this as a book at a later date (which will of course depend on the success of this booklet) I would be pleased to receive any correspondence containing any constructive criticism, or suggestions for additional material to be included.

My [current](#) address is: [245 Bell Street, Coburg 3058 \(2012\)](#),  
[but formerly of](#) [BURW000 EAST, 3151 \(1973\)](#).

## **UPDATE TO 2012** (The “Faulty Towers” of Miscellaneous Meanderings – The cerebral musings of “a piper too” forty years on):

The time has now moved to 2012, and as always happens with the foresight of hindsight, personalities “change”, as do “things”. New “high tech” equipment once frowned upon have now been incorporated into pipe bands, and solo piping, and the standard has “sky-rocketed” – in that otherwise ordinary players can now achieve a pleasing sound, and many “good” players have reached levels of excellence hitherto undreamed of.

All this has been made possible due to science and technology. The “stumbling blocks” have been relegated to the dustbins of history (herstory too !), and people are able to travel to meet their hero’s, or to converse with them on the internet. People are not referred to as an “Irish” piper as they were just a few years ago, in a parochial derogatory way, in Scottish climes. When great playing is heard, interested pipers will rush to hear it, to marvel, and to be inspired anew. It doesn’t matter if the piper is Catholic or Jew, black or white, male or female. Pipers are pipers, for all that, and we drink from the well of acquired skills, of wisdom, of knowledge, understanding, technique, and technologies which have freed us from the drudgery of fickle cane reeds and wet atmosphere bags, leaking bags etc, which once used to take up so much valuable time.

We pipers can now take our pick of who we want to listen to, because we have moved away from blind following of an ancient school, or teacher, who or which, in any case, has long been dead. There are only so many times we can change the handle of an axe, before we must also change the head. In the past, though, inferior players have revered the past “tradition”, and could themselves “no way” emulate what was played before. What we have had handed down to us in music, and particularly here I refer to “piobaireachd”, cannot replicate the sound, or “melodic theme” great musical players have created long ago. Written music as we have it, are merely “dots on the page”, to indicate sequence of pitch and timing – but it falls short of an exact science – as anyone who has listened to computer generated versions of the printed sheet can tell. “Mechanical playing” lacks the “soul” which is “breathed into” the music by consummate artists, who intuitively know when to “cut” or to “pause” to create the “hypnotic” effect of “ecstasy”.

The really “big” music of melodious “piobaireachd” is “ethereal” – a “food for the soul”. A master player “transcends” the limits of “style” or “school”, as he/she extends him/her self to the limits of their own talent and training. The listener too should be “gob-smacked” (“transported”) by the smooth transitions of “turns of phrase”, by the never failing perfection of “fingering technique”, and by the sonorous “boom” of the fundamental “drone tone”. There can be no dis-harmony here, since the “foundation of the instrument” is the “pentatonic scale”, where each of the chanter’s notes are pitched to blend and chord “perfectly” with the unwavering drone sound, itself a “chord” blending the “three” into “one”.

What the great players of yesteryear were to know intuitively, has now been recognized by science. Science has now given us the tools to replicate a good sound, time after time. What was once achievable to few pipers, a few times over a lifetime, can now be appreciated by all listeners, time and time again, through the medium of fine CD recordings, DVD’s, the internet and youtube. None of us as aspiring players can escape the urge to do better, and to sound as good as possible, as we “use every trick of the trade” that we can find. Who wants an irate listener used to better sound ?

Now I do not claim to be a “Master Player”, but not long after writing out the basic pages of “Concise Tutor” I was admitted into the panel of Piping Adjudicator’s of the Victorian Highland Pipe Band’s Association, on which I served until 1992, at which time I cut myself off from playing in solo competitions, and the piping world generally, as I had new hurdles to jump and hills to climb. I have never been a “strong” player (I was always adjudged to play a “weak” instrument). Thus, it was a necessity for me to maintain my bagpipe, and to adjust it’s reeds so that I could “wind” them, and produce a “well tuned” sound. I had no recourse to long practice sessions. One small piobaireachd and I would be “puffed out”, and have to rest. Quite often, I would rest my tail onto a benchtop or chair back while performing at the “Pipers’ Club” to steady me.

I loved to play and to be listened to by peers, but even in this friendly environment, I couldn't last long. That is one reason I got out of playing with the City of Melbourne Pipe Band. Even though I had been a National Serviceman and was posted for service in Viet Nam, I found the rigors of band playing (especially the seemingly unending "tuning up" process) too exhausting. My erratic heartbeat eluded doctors for many years, because this was brought about by periods of stress. Otherwise I was quite alright. I had a number of ECG's over the years which could not find anything wrong.

It was my fault in the end. After so many of these ECG's, my Doctor felt sure she had noticed irregularity, and ordered a 24 hour heart monitor. I didn't bother, feeling quite fed up with the medical system, and so was quite sick the next time I presented. Enlarged heart, accumulated fluid, swollen feet etc. Then on to medications from which it has taken quite a long time to feel comfortable with. I wonder how I would have been advised if Barrie Orme had brought in his stethoscope to listen after one of my Pipers' Club performances ? But we all end up the same – dead, for sure.

Dr Barrie Orme had been a pupil at Scotch College where the Pipers' Club held its meetings, courtesy of Ross Campbell, who was appointed Piping Instructor on the retirement of Bill Brown. Bill had taken the reigns from Danny McPherson just within my memory. I never heard either of them play by themselves, but they all inspired confidence in the pupils I knew. Like my friend and groomsman from the Melbourne Band, Russell Kemp, Barrie Orme was Pipe Major of the Scotch College Cadet Pipe Band in his Matriculation year, and went on to study and practice medicine in Melbourne.

He too had and reared a family, and he followed as one of his sons took up piping at Scotch College. He was passionate about piobaireachd, especially as it had been passed down to him by Hughie Fraser, who I did hear play only once (and as a young learner, I was most impressed, for he seemed to be a cut above most of our band players at the time, even though he seemed to be very old at the time). Hughie was a craftsman in leather, and I was mightily impressed by his collection of plaited whips, and hand made pipe bags. He made one for me, made from kangaroo leather.

Hughie Fraser was descended from a long and illustrious piping line with links to the MacCrimmons, and Barrie took an interest in the style of piobaireachd collected in Australia by Hughie, his mentor. He produced a well documented book "**The Piobaireachd of Simon Fraser with Canntaireachd**" © 1985 ISBN 0 9589848 0 8 which presents the lives and music of a remarkable line of settlers from Scotland into the harsh conditions of Australia. Nevertheless, they lived and worked into productive old age, and instilled into their descendants a love of the pipes and things mystical, Highland, and wild. The handwritten music of Barry Orme's book is written with stems descending from the right hand side of the melody notes, as I have done, in this book. But this method is definitely deemed to be "old fashioned" these days (see pages 2, 3, and 9 of this revised tutor).

During my National Service, Hughie was hospitalized after breaking his hip, and I was able to visit him one final time. It is sad that Hughie's talents were seemingly underappreciated in those days; his "style" in piobaireachd playing was not in vogue, though as you will see in the book, that his history and personal credentials are impeccable. This was in a period of petty jealousies within our piping world. He was "too Australian" for some of the "Johnny come lately's from Scotland", and too Irish for other's (and it just didn't seem fair for him to be so damn good at all that he did !).

There were a few very great "others" also who deserve to be mentioned as piper's who influenced me: Jimmy Ackerley was an old fellow and I only heard him play once at a Hawthorn Pipe Band Christmas Social. Even then, you could tell that he was "special". I, of course, although affiliated with a different band, had heard all about him before we met, since my second tutor, Bill Wallace, had been his pupil, and I had already learned a few of "his" tunes (his settings, too) which I very much admired. And I certainly appreciated Bill's exacting tuition, even though I'd had to "start again", at the very beginning. This was a "wake up" call, since I had already won my first competition !

In my own band, of course, there loomed quite a few personalities. John MacKenzie was a man of great girth and could sing Scottish songs well, while thumping out a basic piano beat. When I first came into contact with him, I was in awe of him, as he sang (this time was just pre-TV) at Scottish Concerts, where he played the pipes for his daughter Flora to dance, while Flora his wife would recite. John could recite in Gaelic for the Haggis, and would also speak in this tongue to old Bill McRaid, and his sister Jessie, who had the strongest of Scottish accents, not lost in the 35 years in Australia. Bill was “tone deaf” and the world’s worst piper, but play he would. He was never allowed to play in competition, so I was amazed that he was allowed to play in our 1960 LP recording (Melbourne Highland Pipe Band); he could not have helped the overall sound (that’s my excuse for the poor standard of the record, which did not do justice to our competition band, nor of the talented players therein – though never enough to field a good twelve).

We had a few very good mature players in our team. Angus MacAffer as Pipe Sergeant, Bill Wallace as Pipe Corporal, Tom Sutherland of the HLI (I was amazed that he could still play with his cigarette burning low between his C and D fingers !) and of course Jack Copeland, who played also the button accordion and bellows pipe. It was this crew that decided me to stay on the path of sobriety, because many bandsmen seemed just to love to drink to excess, in our band, and – it seemed to me – any time. I had brought myself up as “Presbyterian”, but I soon noted, so were some of the chief “offenders”.... How was it that teetotalling “wowsers” could turn good rational and musical men to drink too much “hard liquor” ?

Jack was a non-religious drinking man; he was certainly not of the church attending variety from Ireland, and I used to love it when he would play on the band bus coming back from the Daylesford Highland Gathering. After a bout of hornpipe playing, he would say “and to be sure, I’ve been playing so weel that you’d have thought that the little people were lifting my fingers from off the chanter”.... He later wrote out a hornpipe for me, which I’ve added to my collection as “Jack Copeland’s Hornpipe” which I have not heard any others play; its style is certainly different too. Generally speaking, he played dance tunes quite evenly, and not at all fast, and yet, to my ears, a sweeter sound was not to be heard, even if he’d had a few too many.

We’d had quite a number of talented players who had passed on to other things, had moved away, or joined new bands, and I met quite a few of them, like Charlie Doig (ex British Army Officer) and Duncan MacPhedran. Louis MacLennan (related to the famous G S MacLennan) was a founding member of the band, and I later took piobaireachd lessons from his nephew Duncan, who himself was a powerhouse for the establishment of the Victorian Highland Pipe Bands Association. Duncan too had connections with my band, but was then Pipe Major of the 5RVR Pipes and Drum Band, and President of the VHPBA for many years. I heard him playing first at the Maryborough Highland Games 1960, and I was impressed !

But not long thereafter, I was “taken aback” when he burst into my space protesting that it was “strictly forbidden” for anyone (let alone a learner like me) to render “MacLeod of MacLeod’s Lament” as a “small” tune “Tog orm mo piob”. Of course, I had not even known about the tune’s connection to the Piobaireachd, but had taken it from Father Sydney MacEwan’s LP record singing of it, which had made me want to play it expressively. In any case, Hughie Fraser awarded me the first place in the Learner Piobaireachd Competition that day (probably at that time, it was “Macnab’s Salute” as taught to me by Bill Wallace), so I continued my practice undaunted. And I tried to play tunes at the Pipers’ Club which suited the appetites of the listeners.

One night, I tried out a new technique while playing “Tog orm mo piob” (Duncan was not present), where I took my arm off the bag, and controlled the sound for short periods by my own mouthed air pressure. In this way, I could make the drones “waver” to the beat of my heart – which I thought was “interesting” at least, and an “evocative” way to introduce “atmospheric” affect (the pulsing of the drones). Unfortunately for me, after being “roundly condemned” for such a “desecration”, I was shocked when in my later rendition of “The Flowers of the Forest” (where on my own volition I had used “opened out” Grips in lieu of the usual Birls or Taorluaths on Low A in the first part), the lights were turned off in protest.

The event was held at the then new 1RVR Drill Hall, and apparently, the Barman Alan McBean (who was a Drumming Judge and no mean piper and violin player), “took exception” to my playing of this tune at 1RVR, since it was connected in some way to a tragedy 1RVR had recently experienced. Fortunately for me, old Henry Madden, a stalwart of the VHPBA, a rotten piper, ex British Army man, and 1RVR odd jobs man, drew me aside, to give me some comfort and his sage advice: “Don’t take offence laddie, it’s our problem, not yours”, and “never forget, you play well, so stuff them”.

In those days, it was hard to get any encouragement at all; the Scots amongst us had led hard and frugal lives, and had often been through very bad experiences in the Army, and during the Second World War. They let out their “secrets” very sparingly, and “played their cards” very “close to the chest”. It seemed that they never forgot a slight, or of being beaten (“I was robbed”) in competition (“my style is right, and they don’t know what they are doing; they would murder the tunes !”).

We were firmly discouraged from adjusting our own reeds, and expected to have our drones “tuned” by one of the leaders. We relied on leather bags, which sometimes were not “tied in” well for the comfort of players, so that, for example, the blowpipe had to be gripped tightly, lest it eject (out of reach) from the mouth while playing. Sometimes, chanter stocks were “tied in” so that the players arms had to be unnaturally extended to reach the chanter. All of these flaws were endured with equanimity, because it was so difficult to “retie” and seal the bag again.

Bob Semple apparently had joined up with the 5th RVR as a 16 year old, not long prior to the Second World War, and he served in Africa with the famed “Rats of Tobruk”. Since Bob was interested in marching from his military days, he understudied for Hawthorne’s diminutive Drum Major Jimmy Davies, and took up the reigns when Jimmy died suddenly at the height of his powers. My remembrance of Jimmy was from my appearance at the massed bands parade at the Royal Melbourne Show in 1958, my first band performance.

At that time I did not know that Bob had jumped ranks from being a valued piper to his new role as Drum Major. In 1959, Jack Falconer of my Melbourne Highland Pipe Band led the parade, but Bob Semple stood out in his new role to me as a person to revere, not only because of his gentlemanly demeanour, but because of his confident leadership and smart attire, as the newly appointed Drum Major of the City of Hawthorne Pipe Band. And it was not long before he made his mark as a Drum Major, and Hawthorne continued on being the best drilled band for many years under his leadership. As I write this, he is still alive and well, in his nineties, and still attending band practices and outings.

After I started to play with Melbourne in Competitions (1<sup>st</sup> Competition was at Daylesford in late November 1959) I began to meet up with a few pipers from other bands, and I was particularly impressed by John McIvors’s accomplished playing of “The Hen’s March” among others, and I soon added this tune to my repertoire. “Donella Beaton” and “Glasgow Police Pipers” were two other firm favorites at the time. Ross Campbell similarly impressed me, and I later invited him to my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday so that I could hear more of his playing. Both later became Pipe Major’s of the Hawthorn Band while still very young, when Hawthorne’s P/M Ian Mathieson had to suddenly quit, for reasons of his health. Ross was then later appointed as Tutor to Scotch College as I’ve previously mentioned, where he trained many very good players.

Other player’s of sorts were Bob Smith and Alan Malcolm who were great piping enthusiasts, with lovely personalities. Bob worked for Jack Falconer for quite a time, but really found his gift for organization when he worked for the VHPBA promoting the 1965 Australian Pipe Band Championships. Here he worked with a former Hawthorn’er Ken Williamson who was Secretary of the VHPBA, an old Scotch Collegian Tony Sell, who advised VHPBA on all legal matters, and Duncan MacLennan as President. Other personalities in the VHPBA at that time were Dorrie Williamson (wife of Ken) and

Margaret Johnstone, a former Pipe Major of Melbourne Ladies Pipe Band in their heyday. Margaret later became Secretary after Ken's sudden death and worked hard and long thereafter to make good Ken's Legacy: "MacLennan House" now owned and operated by the VHPBA in Rutland Road Box Hill. This has now been relocated to the premises of a shop-front in Box Hill South.

My father Harry Chalmers later became involved with the VHPBA through his friendships with Ken Williamson and Margaret Johnstone especially, although in his older age he also loved to meet up with Tony Sell, Bob Smith and Bob Semple, people he held in the highest regard. In the 1980's he was appointed as Treasurer of the Association in a difficult period, and worked to computerize the system, to make the accounting easier. Ian Morison as a rising star in Dress and Drill circles, took over from him and worked as Treasurer for many years. Another rising star was Bruce Neale, a side drummer in my own band, who was Duncan MacLennan's chosen "heir apparent". When Duncan died, Bruce took the reigns of Presidency, and steered the VHPBA for many a year after that.

Another interesting Dress, Drill and person through these times were Lew Zilles, of Ballarat. He lived on to a great old age, and became a firm friend of my father, when he retired and moved to Ballarat. Lou's wife Gertie had died years before. She had been Pipe Major of the Ballarat Ladies Pipe Band for many years, and had with Lou (who was also very much into Brass Bands), also taken an interest in training Marching Girls to a high standard. Lou was quite a "wag" and, having been an Army Officer during WW2, was pleased to say that one day he would write a book about all the fools he had met in his army days. He had selected the title of his book: "Bastards I have met". He was in the printing business, and so perhaps ideally placed to undertake such a venture. Unfortunately his printing shop suffered a calamity, and burned down. He lost all the records he had been collecting.

Another stalwart volunteer with the VHPBA was John Anderson whose son Trevor had started as a learner piper with the Mitcham Band. Trevor progressed in the piping world by living out his dream to join up with a Scottish Regiment in the UK, where he served one term before returning home. His Dad John was as "proud as punch", and decided that he too as a former military man during WW2 should commence his studies to become a "Dress and Drill" Judge. Although as smart in dress and personal drill as anyone else, he was rather meanly denied his goal, and he lost his zest, and his interest in bands. My father was particularly "cut up" about this, for although John in my Dad's opinion was not a scholar, he was "a hell of a nice bloke", and a great loss to the VHPBA. Dad sometimes talked about "puffed up popinjay's" to refer to the insufferable "one-upmanship" much in vogue at that time, often by the most mediocre of people, who held a more Scottish Accent if not name.

At that time, another VHPBA volunteer to lose his zest at this time, was John Anderson's friend from the Mitcham Pipe Band, Author Graham, whose daughter Jill I had taught. She later teamed up with another MHPB character and friend of mine Ray McLatchie who took on tuition of the Box Hill Band when Mitcham became "Box Hill". Later on, this band became the precursor to MHPB's "No 2 Band", as promising players were funneled toward it, and Ian Morison rose from playing as a tenor drummer at Mitcham to Drum Major at Melbourne, President of both Bands, Dress and Drill Adjudicator, and finally President of the VHPBA when he succeeded Bruce Neale. As I've mentioned elsewhere, he also served for a number of years as Treasurer of the VHPBA, when he succeeded my father. Jill later played with Nunawading when it rose to Grade 1.

Other folk loomed large in my life as a young payer with Melbourne Highland Pipe Band. Angus MacAffer was a builder by trade, but was able to play a fine tune, on sound-good pipes, which it seemed were held together by an odd assortment of materials. Angus had two sons who also played with MHPB – Malcolm, who succeeded Keith Manifold on the Bass Drum, and Alasdair who was an up and coming piper. John Fraser the Quartermaster was a lovely chap, while Billy Featherston seemed to me to be as "rough as guts" but still a handy piper, and who had a set of pipes I aspired to. Bruce



Neal, also a bit of a larrikin, was a fantastic drummer (I think he had learned from Alec McPhedran and the famed Alex McCormick) and won the Australian Champion title himself at least a couple of times to my knowledge, with me playing pipes as accompaniment once, I think.

Alex McCormick was one of nature's true gentlemen, and at that time humbly earned his living as a laboratory assistant at Scotch College, where he also worked part time teaching the boys of the Cadets his style of drumming. With Bill Brown as Piping Instructor, they formed a formidable team, and launched "their boys" into the competition system via the VHPBA Winter Monthly Solo and Miniature Band Competitions. These were undoubtedly the mainstay pre-training days for entry of juniors into the Highland Games and Pipe Band Competitions then held annually at Maryborough, Dandenong, Heidelberg, and Daylesford. These events were usually commenced with a Street March though the towns to whip up local participation. They also usually fielded Highland Dancing competitions and solo events for both piping and drumming. Ringwood was later added to the list and though it never hosted a "street march" it proved a popular venue and hosted several "Australian Championship" events, as well.

Alex had been brought out to Australia with others, sponsored by the then strong Castlemaine Pipe Band; but unfortunately, their group soon split and splintered to other areas. Probably the shock of landing on so foreign a shore had been too much for them, when wedded to Castlemaine's country isolation, which they had not expected, and their own inclinations to lead, rather than follow.

Alex later retired to Ballarat, where he became a firm friend of my father Harry, after his move there. He befriended all he met, and could hold his own in any intelligent discussion. Alex liked to demonstrate musical concepts on the keyboard, and kept himself up to date in latter day piping and drumming music programs. He was also a great friend of Alan McBean, and although he was entirely abstemious in his ways, with Duncan MacLennan.

Alex had also earlier taught drumming at Ballarat after his shift from Castlemaine, where he taught drummers from near and far. Frank Sertori, an Ararat boy with the Ararat Pipe Band used to travel regularly in his teens to Ballarat to hear the great man at his home, and he was always rewarded by cups of tea and cakes etc generously supplied by Alex's wife, Peg. Frank himself rose quickly through the Post Office to the rank of "Inspector", so had to quit Pipe Bands as he had to travel far and wide to fulfill his duties. But he stayed on as a stalwart of the VHPBA, and was a great friend of Ken Williamson, Bob Smith and Bob Semple, and through them was later accepted into non-playing membership of the City of Hawthorn Pipe Band. He volunteered his time at the various Highland Games, and became recognized for his "golden" voice in announcing, until one day he collapsed, and was taken to hospital. He had an "unexpected" lung condition, upon which he gave up his very heavy smoking habit, on "Doctor's Orders".

In Bruce Neale's MHPB Drum Sergeant days, I could always tell which tune the drummers were playing, since Alex's tuition and settings called for "musical accompaniment". But within a few more years, another style – "power drumming" – emerged through Barry Rowlands, which Peter Clohesy took up with gusto, being a rock and roll band drummer "on the side". In our band, at least, drummers were "looked down upon" by some of the pipers who held themselves to be the "true musicians" – whereas "drummers" they said, were "piper's labourers" only.

Like Hawthorne's Iain Mathieson, we had amongst us at MHPB one who could play both pipes and drum: Ian Stewart succeeded the Pipe-Majorship after Angus MacAffer in 1969, who was then getting old, and I thought, crotchety. For instance, Angus could not abide "new" styles of playing, and castigated me for attempting to play the Jig "The Braes of Melinish" with no High G grace note to separate the High A's across beats in the 4<sup>th</sup> part, which was the first time I had attempted to play "syncopated time", the new "in thing" in Scotland. He just would not accept such innovations. Not that he was the only one, as I was to find out later with regard to piobaireachd styles, where narrow minded thinking "ruled".

We also were fortunate to have Dr Charles Courtney play the pipes with us for a few years from 1963. He was an old Scotch Collegian, and brought a certain “tone” to the band. He had long worked in Perth’s Repatriation Hospital, where he’d settled and married and raised a family. In preparation for his retirement, he was transferred back to Melbourne, where he was Medical Superintendent of the Repatriation Hospital in Heidelberg. He soon returned to MHPB, having been a member in his youth, where he had known Louise MacLennan, Duncan’s uncle and other fine players of the day.

Unbeknown to me, he wrote to the Ministry of the Army when I was called up in 1965, recommending me as a future Pipe Major should the Army form a Regular Army Pipe Band in the future. I was interviewed while still in Recruit Training in 1968, but rejected the overture since it would mean that I would have to “sign up” for three years (instead of the two mandated for me), and in any case, nothing was yet embedded in policy. And why would I voluntarily join the Infantry ? Later on, I was interviewed again whilst preparing to go to Vietnam (1RAR at Holsworthy was raising a Pipe Band at that time), but again I rejected the offer for the same reason, and in any case I planned to get married upon my anticipated “Discharge” from the Army in mid January 1970. I hoped then to put the Army behind me, and to lead a normal life.

I did take my first set of bagpipes to Viet Nam, and its just as well I did, for it afforded me the opportunity to play before US General Kinnard at his “End of Tour Dinner” in Bien Hoa, then a large US Military base. Apparently I was the only piper they could find at that time, so I was whizzed off in a bubble helicopter from Nui Dat for my performance. I took my opportunity to play “A Man’s (just) a Man for All That !” within my selection, and the General winked his recognition of Robbie Burn’s words and tune. Afterwards I was treated by the cooks on duty to the same dinner as enjoyed by the guests – but ate in the kitchen with the cooks. My return flight the next day was in an “Iroquois”, the helicopter troop carrier of the time, which carried machine guns on both sides. The day was cloudy, and we had a great fright when another chopper suddenly rose into view. It was a close call.

After my stint of National Service 1968-9, and back in “civvy street” I was Ian Stewart’s MHPB Pipe Sergeant in 1970-1. We heard about and bought the new Korg Chromatic tuner from Japan; this took a few months to arrange, but this was “sacrilege” to the traditionalists who were “incensed”.

My first trial of the electronic tuner was with the Rats of Tobruk in my first year as Tutor there (we had only time to get them out of their packages a day or so before) was the Thursday before the Daylesford Highland Gathering, and I had the band sounding better than I’d heard it, and “quite easily done”. Unfortunately for me, I didn’t then understand the effects of altitude and damp mists compared to our last Thursday’s practice, at sea level, on a warm night. When we tried out the pipes for the first time in Daylesford, the “pitch of the tuned drones” fell downwards, “off the meter”, and I panicked. Rather than accepting the registration of the chanters and drones at a lower pitch at that damp and cool altitude, I tried to bring the pitch “up” to where it had been before. It was a disaster ! And there was not enough time for me to correct my mistake, because of the early starts we had.

I next tried it out on (a last minute quick whip around on the drones) on the Melbourne Band at the very wet Australian Championships at South Melbourne in 1974. All of us were drenched on the first day; the second was almost as bad, for there was mud, mud everywhere.

But Ian and I powered on, convinced that here was a tool which would raise the standard of even poor bands, as they too tried out this new fangled contraption. In the meantime the criticism was scathing, and when I tried to trial “tape recording” into Judging, that too was denounced. Not that we were the only one’s trying out new ideas at the time, for Ross Campbell had tried out a “tuning fork” type of arrangement a year or so before, probably while he had been the Pipe Major of Hawthorne City Pipe Band.

Later on, after being badly sunburned out on the field on a blistering day, I decided to wear my old “digger’s hat” with brim turned down to better shade my face. Tony Sell and the “traditionalists” were livid that I had desecrated the proper dress code (Balmoral or Glengarry – both of which offered no shade at all) ! At this time, John Rae (D/M of 1RVR) produced three cartoons which depicted me with my new-fangled equipment. These were surreptitiously shown around to belittle me, and many snide remarks were made at the time – behind my back.



*You will note that by this time I had also written an article in the VHPBA's Pipe Bandsman about sensible hearing protection in the band hall, etc.*

I did gain some support, however, and Ross Campbell sported a “Pith Helmet” while judging on-field in the next competition. Pith Helmets were, of course, one way the British Army had made sense of their Indian summer heat, but again, traditionalists were again outraged, the more so because Ross and I had not gained prior permission from the “proper channels”, before our flagrant flouting of all “rules and regulations”. Ross also supported me re the ear plugs/hearing protection issue. But what comes around goes around, and after a number of years, even Tony Sell himself wore a brimmed hat as sun protection, which at that time was becoming newsworthy. Apparently, he’d finally given himself “permission”, and that was the only permission that counted.... And some bands heeded my warning about long term hearing damage.... Common-sense had prevailed, at long last.

Not long after this Angus’s son Alasdair flew off to Scotland, married a Norwegian girl, and settled in Scotland teaching Bagpipes in a remote school. It would be interesting to know whether he had followed in his father’s footsteps in training a new batch of “right-shouldered” players. At one stage we had four of them in the Band, Angus and Alasdair, Laurie Moss, and Charlie MacInna. Laurie Picket I think was also a right shouldered player, taught by Angus, but he had left the band just before I joined. But it certainly did our sound no favors as we countermarched, with much clashing of drones ! Drones were not routinely “tied” together closely at that time, and this was another issue I wrote about.

Interestingly, David Bail, who resigned his Pipe Majorship of 1RVR when he was appointed to succeed Duncan MacLennan to teach the pipes at Haileybury College, was a “left handed player” though he carried the bag and drones to his “left”, presumably to avoid such problems. David was also a member of the judging panel, but concentrated his efforts on his College Band, which, with Bruce Neal as drum tutor, became very successful. He also resigned from the panel a couple of years before I did, and upon his retirement, disappeared from the piping scene and unnecessary controversy.

Within the space of a few years, it seemed that everyone was making use of the electronic tuner, and the standard of tuning “skyrocketed”, as people for the first time could hear their own improvement, with drones being tuned by “meter-readers” who were not necessarily pipers. One day, I was able to take pleasure as I approached Rodger Reid, “tuning up” his favorite pupil for the Nunawading Band. I walked into his peripheral vision just as he held the tuner to the chanter to make sure that the drone pitch still matched the chanter. Ironies of Irony ! But that did not gain me an apology !

Ours was a fraught relationship once Don McPhee, another former Pipe Major of Victoria Police had died. Rodger then sponsored the importation of P/M Nat Russell from Belfast and several others who came with him. Within a few years, both showed me nothing but disrespect on and off field, and once I had a confrontation with Nat, who virtually stood on my toes as he “shirt-fronted” me, calling into question my decisions that day.

Later on, Rodger Reid sat through the whole of my section of solo players (which included his favorite), and soon after the results were read, came to tell me, as Policemen are wont, in no uncertain terms that Nat Russell and he would be looking at all of my decisions very hard in the future. His implication was that I was not a fit judge, and that, since he always agreed with Nat Russell, he was. He recounted how in the recent Australian Championships held at Ringwood, he and his NZ counterpart Ross Wilson had accorded the same placings.

I protested that such was “impossible”, unless they had discussed their opinions before making their decisions, which was not the way of judging in Australia, at least. I pointed out to him that no other pairs of judges at Australian Championships had ever agreed fully, and that I had already noted that my interactions with other judges in these situations had fallen well within the “mean”. Being of mathematical bent, I have always found these things of interest, and had already pondered on the ramifications of differences of opinion.

I did my best to remonstrate with him, to remind him that I myself sometimes disagreed with the results pronounced by other judges, but had never, and would never, call their ability into question – and that it was not right that they should do so in my case – to pronounce the views of their own kangaroo court, without my right of redress.

Interestingly, I probably forgot to mention my “coup de grâce” (knock out blow) at the time, but I mention it now, for it should be a matter of public record, if the sheets have been kept of our “College” meetings which sometimes required us to try out new methods of judging. Ross Campbell had suggested a new “rating system” in 1989, and this was trialed only once for both panels (piping and drumming judges together). We were to watch and listen to a video recording of what were for most of us unknown overseas bands. We were to assess each band individually and assess points in accordance with Ross’s model. We did not keep a record of how we thought the bands should be placed as they went. This was strictly discouraged.

The system worked admirably as to the piping judges. We had more agreement than we’d ever had. All of the Piping judges placed the bands (based on our then tallied sheets), and correctly identified the winners (presuming that the Scottish Judges had done a good job on the actual day) in order from one to six (or was it eight?). However, two of us had placed the band most had thought of as “first”, as “second”; we had reversed the first and second placegetters. Does this matter in the overall scheme of things ? No, it shouldn’t. Nat Russell and I were the ones to buck the trend. I can’t

remember whether Rodger Reid was there, or not, or whether it was made known to us how the actual Judges had placed the bands ! Pity !

But the system seemed to fail hopelessly for the drummers, who didn't like the system at all ! Their placings at the end of the tallying were "all over the place" ! Ross's system was not given another chance for trialing as far as I know, which seems really strange, given that such unanimity is rare amongst Piping Judges – as a look at the "Australian Championships" placing results will clearly show, since the two judge per segment was introduced.

As time went on, I more and more found myself at odds with Nat and Rodger, and thus decided to quit the panel, which I did about 1992-3, which period coincided with an unrelated rapid decline in my own personal health, and new challenges on the workfront.

In the meantime of course, Victoria Police under Inspector Russell's direction went on from strength to strength, fully utilizing the electronic tuner, and younger talented players gleaned from other bands, sometimes interstate. But in due process of time, Rodger Reid himself quit the VHPBA in high hubris, humbled. The reason for this course is on record for those who wish to delve into the 2001 records. Nat Russell stayed on. But after all these years, whilst they have succeeded, it still seems to me strange that I have never heard either of these two actually play the bagpipes.

As always happens, new stars emerge, and the Pipe Band movement in Victoria has been enriched by a younger brood, who themselves have risen to Master Class, given the opportunities afforded them in their appointment at a young age as Tutor's to Scotch, Haileybury, and Presbyterian Ladies Colleges, and their own latent talent. The art of the "big music" of Piobaireachd continues to flourish, and the young "whiz-kids" of today, devoid of any "traditional" inhibitions, are willing and able to fully utilize every bit of new technology and recording devices, to further hone their skills.

This is how it should be: open minds, open hearts, and open ears..., harking always to the "**Fundamental Drone Tone**" of our forbears, but with an eye open for a new tomorrow – and a bright, kindly, and co-operative future. And so, from this vantage point, we look back again, to the near past.

When "The Concise Tutor for Practice Chanter" was originally envisaged in 1973, it was written out in "my own hand", and then produced with the typing help of Anne Marriot. She at that time was a very keen youthful student of mine at the Mitcham Pipe Band, which subsequently reorganized itself into the Box Hill Pipe Band etc. In December 2009, long after we had lost contact with each other, she introduced herself to me at the 5th Parliament of the World's Religions, where I had been co-opted to speak "as a campaigner for equal rights within religion", in a private capacity. She is now a Minister and leader within the Uniting Church ! How the wheel turns !

But getting back to earlier days: Upon my appointment as Piping Instructor to Mitcham Pipe Band in 1972, I was surprised that Mitcham had relied upon the "College of Piping Tutor" (Book 1 of 1952-3), but had not much thought about the "Why" and "How" of completing "movements" such as doublings, taorluaths etc. Since I had been taught "one on one" and had "copied" – as best I could – the demonstrations of my teachers – I had, with the school-masterly teaching of my MHPB friend Bill Wallace, already acquired a good fingering technique. But how to explain it succinctly to others ? Tutor books, however "good", rely on intelligent minds and compliant hands for the uptake of information. They can do nothing, if learners are lazy, and/or don't have the capacity to think things through for themselves.

The **College of Piping** released its second book in 1968, but this sage advice about maintenance and posture etc trickled only slowly to the antipodes – here in Australia. **Seumas MacNeill** and Thomas **Pearston** noted that “The short-cuts to maintaining a well-tuned and a steady pipe are unfortunately unknown to most pipers. The tricks of the trade perhaps have been kept secret” .... They also soon released “Volume Three” of the Tutor to introduce a graded system of exercises. According to “Wikipedia”, these Tutor’s have now been extensively revised and updated by Robert Wallace when he became Principal in 1999, and from that date was issued with an accompanying CDROM. The books are now apparently also available in Scottish Gaelic, French and German. In 2008 it became available in digital format and in 2011 available on iPad an iPhone. How the wheel turns !

But like my peers of that era, I had not gained any inkling as to how I should “best describe” the mechanics of “good technique”. Apart from “**The College of Piping Tutor**”, “**Logans**” was the only other tutor around that I knew of, and these – given the parlous “fingering techniques” in the youthful budding pipers at Mitcham – had failed them miserably. Since I had acquired my own fingering technique over years (with passed down, hand-written exercises – see pages 38 and 39 – etc), I determined that “something should be done” so that intelligent players would not have to go through the same unthinking but intuitive laborious process I’d had to. I felt it in my bones, that I had the talent to put my knowledge to work, and determined that I should leave a lasting legacy – a “shortcut” to “good” fingering technique. This booklet in its original and revised form is the result.

I commenced by telephoning around all of the then “Open Grade” solo competitors, and Pipe Major’s I thought might know. I asked them how they could properly describe in exact order the transition of one note to another, with a simple High G gracenote to separate them. All of them had to excuse themselves until they brought their chanters to the phone, to do a bit of “on the spot” investigation. Now this group were already familiar with the College of Piping and Logan’s Tutors, but had not digested the material available to them, either.

With chanter’s in hand, some of them were able to suggest the change from low A to B as outlined in the College of Piping Tutor by Seumas MacNeill and Thomas Pearson (as mentioned this book has been extensively revised since by Robert Wallace in 1999 with accompanying CDROM). I then asked them how to perform the same feat when the notes descended from a higher note to a lower note. That bewildered them even further. That action had not been taught in the book. And as to how to describe where the beat falls within a “movement” preceding a “beat note” was concerned: “No !”

So I decided to analyze “step by step” the technique I had been taught. To my surprise, my method of playing differed from that proposed by the College Tutor. My method is consistent: “**Play the first melody note, then pay the second melody note, and *at the same time* lift the High G gracenote finger. When the G’ gracenote finger is lowered, the second melody note will sound, correctly fingered**”. So, in playing the G’ gracenote by raising the G’ finger, we simultaneously prepare to play the second “full” or “melody note”.

Rising (to a higher note) or falling (to a lower note), the technique is the same. And the gracenotes, or more complex “**movements**” (doublings, grips, birls, shakes, taorluaths etc) **take “time” from the value of the note which follows** (the final note in each couplet). In noting the difference, we should also note that “in practice”, a person who does not make “crossing noises” (unplanned extra notes), cannot be found to be wrong, whichever method he/she follows. The length of any gracenote is so small, that any difference of pitch cannot be noticed. The main thing is to know and understand how you yourself do it properly, and then do this consistently as you proceed in the “exercise” or “tune”.

I did also at that time produce a sound cassette tape recording, which demonstrated all of the “movements” and “exercises”. Forty years on, I still think that young learners should learn these, and perfect repetitive “exercises”, but then, “with the benefit of hindsight”, I have known some pupils to progress more quickly using the “simple tune progression” method. Really, all tuition should be tailored to each learner’s requirements. If to keep an impatient student interested, and “melodic memory” is found to work best, then that method should be used.

But always, it helps to fall back on “exercises”, which, because of their “regularity”, are best placed to expose inconsistencies of playing. It doesn’t hurt either to play “new” tunes “naked” of gracenotes and/or “movements” at first, when learning the melody without distraction, so that the “melody”, “rhythm” (time signature) and “tempo” can be more easily appreciated and “digested”. If the movements used in the tune have been thoroughly practiced to great accuracy, then they can then be added, without distortion of the tune’s “song”, “rhythm”, or “tempo”. As time goes by, more complex tunes can then be attempted with confidence.

Tape and video recordings are useful tools. Students should be encouraged at points of their progression to “beat time” with their feet, and then asked to play without that necessity, so that they can do so immediately on command, or not do it with the same ease. Students should also be encouraged to learn to play new tunes “devoid of any embellishments or graces” for a time, and then to introduce “the full gamut” of movements, which must take time off, from the note which follows (ie “shorten the note which follows”).

The use of, and practice with, metronomes – both “mechanical” and “electronic” should be encouraged in the playing of exercises, and rhythmic march and dance tunes. Laments, Slow Airs (simple tunes), and Piobaireachd are a “different kettle of fish” entirely, for they are “pure ‘soul’ music”, and “non rhythmic” in their expression, except in the performance of the “movements” which must remain balanced and regular, if not “more slowly” played. **The chanter should be held “tenderly”** and not gripped as if it were in a “vice”, so that the fingers have the best chance to “perform with ease”, without tension (see Page 35).

Teacher’s should point out if learners are puffing their cheeks out “excessively”, or if they hunch their shoulders or turn their head. The blowpipe also should only be gripped “lightly”, and if possible blown from the centre of the mouth. Students should be encouraged to handle their instrument with respect and care, and taught proper maintenance procedures. They should be encouraged in the use of electronic tuners; three together is good practice for “three drone” chord tuning. It is well to practice “three drone” tuning “three ways” (starting from each of the three drones) as follows – eg\*:

The “method” for **three drone tuning** is simple, though it seems complex. Using three electronic tuners, set to “sound” and with one to “low” and two to “medium” (which is an octave higher than the one set at low). Set them all sounding initially at B<sup>b</sup> (B flat)(“A=440”) and hear that “no beats, or disturbances, can be heard in the drone “chord”. The combination should chord perfectly to give an unwavering “mmmmmmmmmmmm” sound. Then **with eyes closed**, change the base\* drone tuner setting “downwards” to lower the pitch somewhat. Notice the waver in the overall sound then.

Generally speaking, the tuner which stands as the “centre” tenor drone should be adjusted next, **with eyes still closed**. Then “tune in” the centre tenor drone tuner as well as you can to the bass drone sound. This will prove to be a bit difficult, since the “outer tenor” has not yet been adjusted. Having made the first adjustment to the centre tenor drone sound, **still with eyes closed**, and **concentrating on the bass drone sound**, bring the outer tenor into as tune as best you can. **Then repeat the steps without changing the base drone**: centre tenor, then outer tenor. This can be done several times until you hear the unwavering “mmmmmmmmmmmm” sound again at the lowered pitch. Then **open your eyes**, to check that the “pointer needle readings” agree. Then repeat the process over and over, until you are able to achieve consistent “good” results (**unwavering drone tone**).

**A fourth electronic tuner can then be introduced**, set to “high”, to mimic the sound of the chanter’s “High A” (A’). The bass and tenor sounding tuners can then be adjusted “without looking, and using the same method, until the **unwavering “mmmmmmmmmmmm”** sound “chords” with the High A (A’). Then change the High A tuner’s setting, and by concentrating on that pitch, with eyes shut, repeat the process (Base, centre tenor, outer tenor/ Base, centre tenor, outer tenor) again and again until you can perfectly chord the drones to the chanter perfectly, and quickly. Some people\* may prefer to make their “first adjustment” with one of the tenor drones, and “tune in” the others to “it” (but take care to be consistent to save confusion).

In the “real world”, we have other issues to address as well when we are playing the pipes by ourselves. This process is also made more difficult by the interference of others, and especially if other pipers from other differently pitched bands are playing nearby.

Generally speaking, pupils should be encouraged to ask questions, and to do their own chanter and pipe maintenance, but it is the instructor's duty to **not** allow a student to endure reeds “too strong” for their age, build or sex, since this does not encourage “steady and consistent” blowing. It is also the tutor's responsibility to ensure that the “bagged” instruments are correctly adjusted to suit the size of the pupil. When the reeds are “too strong” for an individual's capacity, they produce and blow too much saliva, and this is no good for the reeds. Even if we utilize modern “dry atmosphere” pipe-bags, we should not rely on them to curb our spit – it will not, if the reeds are too hard.

It is a good idea to have a “**practice goose**” (**bag with blowpipe and chanter fitted**) so that the art of steady blowing can be learned prior to “stepping up” to the pipes. This can save a lot of anguish, for there is nothing worse than hearing an untuned screeching wail, sporting plenty of “chokes” (when the chanter “stops” unintentionally due to undulating pressure). The simple aid of a “water manometer” can show how each student is going – an even pressure should not vary “momentarily” by more than 1 inch up or down from the average pressure. The electronic tuner's needle also should remain “steady”, and not waver.

Keith Routley (also a Hawthorne City Pipe Band stalwart) was a schoolfriend of Jimmy Ackerley's son, and, like me (with Bill Wallace, but years before), had been started “afresh” under Jimmy's tuition, and “buckled up” for a lifetime of learning from his mentor, and anyone else who could shine a bright beam of light onto his quest, for musical knowledge into the why's and wherefore's of good Highland Bagpipe playing. He was the only one of the group I had phoned who could explain logically the “first principles” of note progression “with” a gracenote to separate them.

Though he still used them himself, he was not much concerned with continuing traditional practices (sheepskin leather bags and blowpipe valve, and “dressings” to help seal the bag against leaks, and to absorb moisture) for their own sake. He recognized that bellows blown pipes were easier to maintain, and used a “dry atmosphere” approach, though he was a naturally dry blower himself (lucky for him !). He was “open” to new ideas which could make the life of piper's easier, and which would help them produce a consistent and “good” harmonious sound.

When I first met Keith through the Pipers' Club, I recognized that he had sensible and progressive views, and made arrangements to visit him for “lessons”. I was already playing at “Open Grade” Level, and once had achieved a “ten out of ten” for “tone and tuning” from R U Brown who had visited Australia in 1972 for the Australian Championships held in Hobart.

As far as I know, mine was the only “ten” score Bob awarded that day. This may have been a “fluke”, because I still operated under a “wet” system – that is, to moisten my chanter reed with “spit” to bring it into its optimum vibration – and to the wiping out of moisture which accumulated as I played from the drone reeds and bores, the use of a condensation tube etc. But fluke or not, such a high score from R U Brown gave me confidence that I was as capable as anyone in the “tuning department”.

No doubt it was to this score that Doug Thoreson OAM (Captain Retd) referred to when he said years later “Donald Chalmers... has a fine technique and sound, and has a highly academic and technical approach to all facets of solo piping and the adjudication of Pipe Bands”. I had met Doug at the Competitions for the first time in Hobart with my parents, and we compared our results over a late cut lunch. I was mightily impressed by his abilities, and the fact that he had completed his Pipe Major's Course with distinction at Edinburgh Castle, as part of his training with the Australian Army.

P/M Bob Brown also made some helpful written observations which I tried to take notice of, even though I was unable to speak to him much at the time, due to his illness, and premature death a month later, upon his flight back to Scotland. Bob advised me to learn to tune “three drones together”



to avoid “stopping and starting” drones in the tuning process, and to play “tuning phrases” (eg rhythmic passages from a different piobaireachd where possible, during the tuning-up process, from a similar tune which used the same notes – to test them – by listening for any apparent drone “shift”). He also advised me to “open out” my taorluath and crunluath movements, especially in the “singlings” of the variations.

Keith Routley, I discovered, had long been a fan of Brown’s “Balmoral Style” of piobaireachd playing, and later gave me the tapes made by one of his Tasmanian pupils, Robin Sutherland, who had taken some lessons in from R U Brown and P/M Nicol in Scotland. It was from these tapes that I “noted down the details” in my “**Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor**”, by Archibald Campbell of Kilberry, first published in 1948. I later typed up these notes, and have **now appended** these with this, my revised edition of “Concise Tutor for Practice Chanter”, so as **to concentrate my work in the one place**.

The Kilberry Book of 1953 uses the same or similar “abbreviated” style of writing and presentation as the “Piobaireachd Society” in its books which commenced at Book 1 in 1925, and presents the tunes into recognizable barred “phrases” and “types”. Though I have all of the Piobaireachd Societies books, I prefer to use the Kilberry book if possible, since it has a larger printed page, and can be read more easily. Both books contain a lot of written material which tries to describe different styles of playing etc; but words can only help “so much”. The tapes were invaluable. Some of the “canntaireachd” (ie sung “words” or “vocables”) by which earlier generations memorized their tunes, are discussed there. As in all things, those who can “sing well”, to “pitch”, and with “expression”, make the best job of it; otherwise the rendition is just plain “dull”, and boring (though it may express the “timing” and the “movements” used).

Later on, and since Ian Stewart and I had purchased a “Korg Chromatic Electronic Tuner” each, and a couple of others for bandwork, we experimented in Ian’s kitchen, setting up one tuner as “bass drone”, two as “tenor drones”, and one as the “chanter”. Setting these to “sound”, and octaves apart, we soon discovered the best method. It is very logical, and a wonder that we had not worked it out before. We made sure that each of the tuners were calibrated correctly and to each other, and thus registered the same pitch for the same notes emitted. If the chanter’s Low A is set to “B flat” on the tuner, its pitch should register at “A=440” cycles per second (although in fact “B Flat” should register at 466.164 cycles per second, if it were to truly note the number – as explained in **Section 5 Page 31** of this revised Tutor) when the pointer points to “B Flat”. High A, of course, should record the same number, but will be in fact an octave “above”. That is, High A’s frequency doubles that of Low A .

Low G and High G, though an “octave” apart, will both show a pitch of “439” cycles per second (a variation of “minus one” from the normal – ie “-1”) when the tuner’s pointer points to “G Sharp” (ie G<sup>#</sup>) so that they “chord” or “tune” with the chanter’s “A”, which is replicated throughout by another tuner, while the pointer is pointing to B Flat (ie “B<sup>b</sup>”). Piper’s with good pitch discrimination will be able to prove to themselves that this is “so”, and is in fact “required”, so that no “pulsing” or “beating” of dissonance – or apparent “shift” of drone can be detected. All should remain “steady”.

For B, D and E, there should be “no difference” (ie when the chanter’s B, C and D sounds are replicated alternately by one tuner, while another tuner mimics the drone sound at “A=440 – ie B<sup>b</sup>”). For C, F, and G, however, the differences for tuned chanter notes are “-3”, “-4”, and “-1” respectively.

If we want to become authentic players of the Great Highland Bagpipe, and If we don’t wish to get bogged down by theory and ratios, percentages and cents, this knowledge is the “**the key**”, the “**holy grail**” insofar as the bagpipe “scale” is concerned. If, as the piobaireached masters of old were concerned, we too look to perfect the chanter’s “chording” from note to note, as compared to the chord of the drones (one bass, and two tenors one octave above the base), we must concentrate on the “**Fundamental Drone Tone**”, which “**grounds**” a well played instrument.

The base drone, as shown by **Seamas MacNeill**, in his work as a physicist in his book “*Piobaireachd and its Interpretation*” **1954** has a strong harmonic at the chanter’s E, which serves as a convenient reference, if we are tuning ourselves manually, which should always be our aim.

But the reason for our difficulty on the bagpipes was very clear: even we ourselves achieved a “steady instrument” only occasionally. We had a lot of work to do to discover a “more-dry” environment for our reeds. I tried a “moisture condensation tube” which arced from its sealed blowpipe connection to the back of the bag. The end of this was sealed, but contained openings on its upper side to direct the condensed air forwards towards the reeds. The longer the condensation tube, the higher the pressure we had to blow against, so this was a balancing act. After a period of playing, the blowpipe itself should be removed, and the bag and tube “lifted” to let out the collected moisture residue through the blowpipe’s stock.

We tried different patented bag dressings; and quickly discovered the benefits of those that absorbed moisture, to thus prevent moisture accumulation on the reeds themselves. The weight of the beads of moisture slows the vibration of the tongues of the drone reed, and this slowing accelerates as more moisture accumulates. How could we have missed this important observation ? No one had told us. Most of our teachers just “didn’t know”, or kept this information to themselves. There can be no doubt that the famous players of yesteryear knew about this, and it is likely that either they had naturally “dry” mouths, or that they encouraged this by the drinking of whisky, and also used a moisture absorbing bag dressing.

Around this time one young Melbourne based Pipers’ Club player Geoff Ross, along with another Club Member Colin Cairns produced a new “plastic-cane” drone reed set, which could also be adjusted in two ways – by adjusting the vibrating length of the “tongue” by means of it’s “bridle”, or by adjusting the volume of the “column of air” inside the reed, by means of an adjustable “plug” at the reeds end. Not long after this, Geoff produced has new “synthetic” pipe bag, where the stock positions were “pre-set”, and made airtight with clamps. This new bag also contained a “moisture control”, in that all air blown “in” passed through dried moisture absorbing “crystals” which can be accessed through the rear of the bag, which itself is sealed by a metal clamp. I am proud to say that I was one of the first to take up these new techniques, and to demonstrate their effectiveness, here in Melbourne.

The “crystals” should be removed at the end of each session, and heated in the oven or microwave to “dry” them. We should observe steam rising, allow the crystals to cool naturally, and then re-insert them at room temperature into their container and blow away “dust” generated in the drying process (taking care not to inhale any of it), reconnect the canister, and reseal the bag by the metal clamp. While the Drone Reeds operate very well in very dry environments, the Chanter Reed needs to be exposed to some moisture, so that the “spacers” should be used to allow some moist air to flow.

This new system (bag and reeds) has taken the world by storm, and with the use of the electronic tuner, has enabled the rise in standards, where even ordinary players can achieve a reasonable sound. Other manufacturers from both “new” and “old” countries have come “online” to take a share of this innovation which uses modern technology and knowhow. This has been very good for piping, and for pipe bands, which had hitherto been thwarted and shriveled by the blinkered myopia of “traditionalists” who tried every trick in the book to belittle and ridicule progressive minds.

Some people “blow” naturally “dry” and can thus achieve great things in “tuning” denied lesser mortals, who all too frequently are “wet blowers”. Many people think that by buying the instrument of a great player that they themselves will be transported to greatness, but that is not the case. The player him or her self firstly must have “fine pitch discrimination” and firmly reject what is not pleasing to the ear.

Secondly, the player must have a good sense of rhythm and cohesion, and to be able to march “in step” with other band players. However he/she should also be able just to “walk in no particular rhythm” when playing solo “laments” (outpourings of grief), “slow airs” (slow melodies which rejoice in their “tunefulness”), or “piobaireachd” (this word is sometimes simplified to “pibroch”) which is the “Great Music of the Scottish Highland Bagpipe”, which requires a good memory, a well maintained instrument, and the most skill and greatest dexterity of the fingers. Such “classical music” of the instrument, found its “zenith of expression” with the MacCrimmon’s of the 1700’s. This was before the breakup of the “Clan” system by “Hereditary Chiefs” who dispossessed their own clansmen and women, as they laid claim to what hitherto had been the property of “all”.

Thirdly, each player should be prepared to attempt to perfect the fingering technique which has been “standardized” over the last few hundred years. That is not to say that individual exceptional players should limit themselves to the “movements” of the ordinary. There can be no doubt that with diligent study of other musical forms, that other forms of expression will be found to suite the bagpipe. In fact, with tapes and video’s, CD’s, DVD’s and computers now in common use, great players should not limit themselves to the enjoyment of one instrument only. True musicians learn from each other, and are pleased to interact kindly with their peers, without the hint of condescension.

Years ago I trialed **Arnold Bentley’s** 1966 “**Musical Aptitude Tests**” while an instructor at the VHPBA’s Scotch College “Workshop of Pipers and Drummers”, and noted some interesting results: at least one “Open Grade” player did not score well, but, it seemed had overcome his paucity of score and perhaps innate ability – by dint of hard practice, and by his use of his untested skills. Most “Open Grade” players did well on the test, which tested for “pitch discrimination”, “tonal memory”, “chord analysis”, and the ability to reproduce a pattern of “rhythm”.

What was not tested of course were “intelligence”, or whether or not the players were “blessed” with two arms and two legs, normal sized fingers, and a robust, healthy constitution. All of these things a tutor must consider before he/she accepts a pupil. Unfortunately for me, I was too kind hearted to refuse many, since I hoped that each learner’s initial enthusiasm would not waver (I could not bear to shatter their dream, even if it was the dream of the parent), so that I could build them into an enthusiastic “band” player, at least.

But I could have saved myself many frustrating hours had I fully utilized my first “intuition”. Some of my students were musical dyslexic’s, quite unable to read musical notes presented on the ladder of the staff, some lacked co-ordination of the fingers, some lacked strength, and some lacked the social graces expected of even an ordinary band person. But that is not to say that some of these were not “intelligent”. Some of them were gifted in other areas, no doubt, but not on the bagpipes.

But, to get back to my own experiment using **Arnold Bentley’s** “**Measure of Musical Abilities**” – “**Musical Aptitude Tests**”. These were designed especially for use of children of elementary school age. Over the years tested, as children grow, the scores gained for repeated tests had been shown to increase to a plateau, which would then remain, apparently, for life. Given the age of the child, and the child’s score, the children and adults can be graded into “percentages of the population”. To produce a great sound, piper’s need to have a “pitch discrimination” of under 1 cycle per second. This fact can easily be appreciated when we use electronic tuners in the testing.

Some otherwise “reasonable” players of pipe and drum, had very good scores as per the test, but had not improved over years; had never displayed any particular talent whatsoever, though they had the inclination to continue “playing”. So it seems that lack of consistent and intelligent practice actually hinders those who should have been (according to the tests) brilliant players. Are such players morally bankrupt, and spiritually lazy ? Are they content to being just one of the “strugglers”; too afraid to really “shine”, or “stand apart” from the crowd, and to rest content with being “led” ?

Perhaps also (and here is the rub) oftentimes, their home or working lives are not conducive to bandwork. They have the ability to do better, but are just too busy to practice. A Pipe Major, as “one who leads” should encourage the talents people do have, and not belittle those who have “no time”. Not all are destined to be able to devote much time for what – for them is – “relaxation” – time away from the demands of home and/or business life.

Also tested during my early thirties were the “filing” and “taping” of my chanter, to achieve better harmony with the chord sound of my drones. At that time I was much ridiculed for this. Some were “outraged” ! Though I am quick to admit that most problems in the pipe chanter’s scale has to do with the “reeding of the instrument”, I nevertheless reserved the right to adjust my own instrument. “Filing upwards” (which “shortens” the column of air to the exit hole, sharpens the pitch) can be “taped down” again (to flatten the pitch of the hole’s note) if necessary. Too much filing upwards, however, affects the quality of that note, just as “too much” taping also can be detrimental to the sound (as the hole is enlarged, or reduced in area).

If we have access to chanter reeds, then we should learn how to adjust them. In the 1970's to the 1990's the only book I knew of which gave much advice on this was **"The Piper's Handbook"** by Captain **John A Maclellan**, published in 1964. Another book, for a different instrument is **"The Oboist's Companion"** by **Evelyn Rothwell 1974**, which gives good advice regarding the making and shaping and adjustment of double-bladed reeds. Imagine my surprise after 20 odd years of "no playing" for me to read (after my checking "online" as to the exact names of the said books, rather than having to go looking for them) of the advances which have been made in these areas !

There is now a **"Complete Piper's Handbook"** by South Australia's Pipe major **Brett Tidswell**, who was just emerging from youth 20 years ago, or so it seemed to me then. Also, through his "School of Piping" website obtained through "Google-search", I soon found myself drawn through a "link" to look at the accomplishments of Victoria's **Mark Saul**, and **Murray Blair** and their **"Bagpipe Tuners"**, which I had noticed demonstrated in their infancy several years ago at the Pipe Band Competitions at Daylesford. It seems that these young men have by their intellect and enthusiasm, transformed piping world-wide, and made the impossible possible for even the most "simple" and "ham-fisted".

And not only that, have gained great reviews for their efforts. They are to be congratulated !

Standing on the cusp of change in worldwide ground-breaking and myth-shattering communication technology, "they" have truly grasped their potential. It is for us old hacks just to wonder. Even lesser mortals can now aspire to "sound good", at the very least ! And I am thankful ! In former times, only the best could "sound well", and fewer could play well, for dearth of good teachers. Teachers then, like their pupils, were often impoverished by lack of time, due to the hard labour and physical work expected of most, and the long hours of travelling by public transport.

In Australia, although the Eight Hour working day was achieved in the 1850-70's, most men had to work 12 hour shifts during wartime, and had to travel an hour or so to and from work. Most boys left school at 14, and went out to work as "men". My parents counted themselves lucky to attend school to year 11. My father didn't keep up a vegetable patch as many men did in their spare time, because he had to cycle to the Station several miles on one bike he left there, caught a train to Richmond, and then had to cycle another mile or so on another bike to get to work, and then come back.

After the war, when I was about five years of age, I became aware of a kilted man striding down our Street. He was Len Byron, who had served overseas, and was the Drum Major of the 5-6 Royal Victoria Regiment of the time, which fielded a Pipe Band, later Pipe Majored by Duncan MacLennan. "Mr Byron" told me that he measured his "stride" (length of step) which was then militarily "set in stone" by the number of steps he counted between each lamppost. He cut "a magnificent figure" to me as a child, and when I later heard the Victoria Police Pipe Band play at my first Primary School Fete, my ambition was born.

I was devastated when a player I approached refused my request for him to let me have a try. It took quite a few years of "harping" to my mother, but eventually, through Len Byron, I started lessons with John MacKenzie, the Pipe Major of Melbourne Highland Pipe Band. He had been thus engaged for over thirty years. It was then remembered first by my father's Uncle Jack, that Grandfather Chalmers had played the pipes in his older age, and produced a very small photo of him – old and bent and shriveled, nursing a very decrepit looking set of pipes. The pipes were long lost, but I got the sgian-dubh, which was a thrill and great encouragement, when encouragement and money were hard to come by.

Since my father's father was the youngest son of a second marriage, his Grandfather was "old" and had died by the time he was about five years old. Uncle Jack had himself bought the sgian-dubh for him while stationed in the UK during WW1. My father's memories of his grandfather extended to his love of ferrets to rabbit with, and also of Grandfather crying when he'd had to take his old friend, his horse Molly out one last time into the field, to

shoot her. No doubt he realized that his own time on earth was fast diminishing, so that he wanted to be the one to do this final act of kindness. My Dad too was kind hearted, but never told his Grandfather about the demise of his Pa's favorite ferret, which made the mistake of biting him.

But I digress, so back to latter days: In 1986, my Pipers' Club friend Robert McCulloch and I laboured mightily to complete a project we had long envisaged, and the fruition of our work was published as "**The New Melody Directory – Highland Bagpipe**" in Two Volumes in 1986 (ISBN 1 86252 978 7 for the set), and this was **reviewed by Seumas MacNeill in The Piping Times in December 1987** (Volume 40 No 3). By Seumas's own admission, he had some querulous complaints – about the thumbnail sketches of ourselves – the author's, and of "our friends" (our Australian Referees), all of whom (qualifications notwithstanding) were, apparently, unknown to him.

Seumas admitted that he had not properly read the instructions contained in both volumes, and it was this which prevented him from finding one tune in Volume 2 (the melodic sequence version). He then went on to pay us the highest compliment, saying "if all else fails, read the instructions". But even then, he "fell" on his own sword, because the "introductory notes... given in Volume 1" are not omitted in Volume 2 (this was again his own misreading of my reply to his enquiry). Our system recognizes that "starting", or "introductory notes" do not necessarily form part of the melody (which is more properly defined by the "melody" or "thematic" notes which are shown following the first bar line). They were not "omitted, but merely "displaced" to a later position, to recognize this fact.

The New Melody Directory was also reviewed by a popular UK radio program called "Mainly Military", which harped on another of Seumas's gripes (that we "could not have got to them all". On the other hand, they could not say which books we had missed) – that we would have to update all the time to keep up with new publications. It was lucky indeed that hidden in all of the criticisms were a few positives: "to be highly congratulated", "magnificent production", and "there are thousands of pipers who will be glad to obtain copies, and if wives and sweethearts are looking for Christmas presents, they could not do better". This last also came with a proviso – if they could afford it.

If you have been fortunate to grow up in today's modern society, you may find it difficult to imagine what it was like for piper's only a generation or two ago – no photocopiers, no computer's to store and collate information, no internet, no emails, no "skype", no "youtube", no CD's, no DVD's, hardly any international mail (which was expensive), and expensive travel by air or boat to places half a world away to "the hub of piping", in Scotland. This at least had "spokes" extending out to Canada and the United States, and more tenuous links to the "antipodes". Any correspondence I have had with pipers of note were not easily retained; much has been lost, and now I am in the process of "scanning" those I can find, making an "electronic copy" so that history will not forget them so easily.

Samples from "The New Melody Directory – Highland Bagpipe – Volumes 1 and 2" are included here (see Page "S") for this reason. It is unfortunate indeed that the technology available to us in 1986 did not extend to proper typeset printers. In the event, we borrowed an expensive dot matrix printer, which is hard to transfer through "scanning" to perfectly readable text. I still have my old office computer on hand, hoping that someone, somewhere will be able to transfer the NMD data stored there in an old format. I used "WordStar" at the time on a Seiko 8300 computer.

I have referred to our NMD system of encoding tunes (which has a "one to one note/time correspondence") later (see Section 9 Pages 45 and 51), but here, for the moment, is a picture sample and explanation of our work on the following pages (on pages "S" and "T"):

EXTRACTS: Samples of material contained in the work are shown below.

SCOTLAND THE BRAVE - MARCH - 4/4



MARCH TUNES \*\*\* MELODY SEQUENCE

PAGE:

MELODY	TIMING	TYPE	TIME	START	START	TITLE	BK	PGE	TNE	COMP	PT
			SIG	NOTES	TIME		No	No	No	No	
a	ab c- c	c	4/4	e	q	WINGS	20	24	584		2
a	ab ca ce	c	2/4	e	q	SCOTLAND THE BRAVE	6	5			2
a	ab ca ce	c	4/4	e	q	SCOTLAND THE BRAVE	9	8	11		2
a	ab ca ce	c	4/4	e	q	SCOTLAND THE BRAVE	36	66			2
a	ab ca ce	c	4/4	e	q	SCOTLAND THE BRAVE	37	73	77		2

PAGE:

MARCH TUNES \*\*\* NAME SEQUENCE

TITLE	TYPE	TIME	START	MELODY	START	TIMING	BK	PGE	TNE	COMP	PT
		SIG	NOTES		TIME		No	No	No	No	
SCOTLAND MY AIN NAME	M	2/4	cb ac	ea df Af	ss Qs	Qs qq Qs	6	10			2
SCOTLAND THE BRAVE	M	2/4	e a	ab ca ce	q c	Qs qq qq	6	5			2
SCOTLAND THE BRAVE	M	4/4	e a	ab ca ce	q c	Qs qq qq	9	8	11		2

Naturally, only “melody” or “thema” notes should be included in any “shorthand” system, since any competent musician can place the usual “movements” (Gracenotes, Doublings, Taorluaths, Birls etc) into the mix later.

It was important that a method of “one to one correspondence” was found, so that the samples of thought could be written one line under the other.

I use “lower case” for notes from Low G to F (ie g, a, b, c, d, e, f) and “upper case” to distinguish High A and High G.

Capitalizations of the note values indicate “dotted” values (ie “C” to indicate a dotted Crotchet, “Q” to indicate a dotted quaver etc).

Such a system can be used to note down tunes which your mind envisages whilst you are driving (eg while stopped at traffic lights, if you have pen and paper handy). This is the method I used to fix “Gracenotes Exercise”, “First Grandchild”, and “Leaving (Drummers Salute)” in my mind, so that I could write them down later on manuscript paper. Another method I have used is to sing the tune into my cassette tape recorder (see “My Friend Frank”) which was envisioned after listening in real time to a broadcast of the actions of the Falklands War, which had dredged up old memories for me. In that case, I added a third part years later, when I was feeling sad for my friend, Frank, and named the tune, for him. I played it at his funeral.

Nowadays, pipers can use very portable micro-cassettes or even their mobile phones to capture a tune which has sprung into their head. All of these techniques are very helpful, so we must “always be prepared” – that is, take along with us the means to capture our new tunes, before they escape us, perhaps never to return. One tune came to me in a dream, and I finally roused myself to note it down (see “Not Sleep (Dreaming)” Section 9 Page 49).

It has been established, from our NMD experience, that “the first four beats of a tune, with their timing, are enough to identify it.” The rest of the tune in any case generally follows in the same vein, distinctive style, or manner. The New Melody Directory’s “Starting” or “Introductory Notes” also point to the difficulties which can arise, where we have noted down tunes in “modern notation”, rather than “old style” notation. It also discusses the alternatives regarding “displacement” of the bar-lines in 3/4 March Tunes, when starting notes are included in the body of the tune. Another device (“ –”) was used to show notes of the same pitch which are “tied”, across beats – without the device of a gracenote to separate them.

Since in “**Piobaireachd**” (which is the ancient “**Classical**” or “**Great Music**” of the **Great Highland Bagpipe**) four beats are not always sufficient to separate tunes, so I devised a slightly different system, as shown in the following samples to further tease out the identity of these tunes:

MACLEOD'S SHORT TUNE

SIR JAMES MACDONALD OF THE ISLES' LAMENT

LACHLAN MACNEILL OF KINTARBERT'S FANCY

I AM PROUD TO PLAY A PIPE

LADY MARGARET MACDONALD'S SALUTE

FROM GEN. THOMASONS "CEOL MOR" - LAMENT FOR THE DUKE OF HAMILTON

CONTINUOUS MODE :  
FIRST PHRASE :

You should note that books older than the modern era (which began to utilize “abbreviations” to indicate particular movements to save time, and to show the underlying theme at a glance) may indicate what we now recognize as a “movement” with “stems up” as “melody notes” (stems down).

Some of these tunes are noted “both ways”, and some only in the “old way”. Thus it was that “along the way” (when I had realized that this was the case), I noted down such tunes in “continuous mode” as shown in “Lament for the Duke of Hamilton”.

**General Thomason’s** book “**Ceol Mor**” (published in 1893) is not much used nowadays, but was one of the first attempts to render what had hitherto been displayed as a mass of notes “intelligible” to the ordinary player, and (try) to render the tunes more “readable”.

The **Piobaireachd Society** commenced in 1925 to publish books in large print in their own style, and this was followed by Archibald Campbell of Kilberry’s “**The Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor**” in 1948/53, which noted the differently structured tunes, but chose to classify the 114 tunes by their Taorluath and Cruinluath variations.

Their predecessors are rare now, but we have much to be thankful for – eg “**A Complete Tutor for the Highland Bagpipe with Piobaireachd Exercises, and a Selection of Marches, Strathspeys, and Reels, Followed by a Piobaireachd Arranged by Donald MacPhee**” 25 pages. According to my “google-search” and Amazon.com’s narrative, its Publication Date was in 1877:

*“MacPhee had a short but stellar career as a piper, bagpipe maker, and compiler of piping books. As a piper, he was especially renowned for his strathspeys and reels. After his death at just 39, his pipe-making business was taken over by Peter Henderson.”*

So it seems most likely that MacPhee’s work was the progenitor of the original “Logan’s Tutor”, later revised by P/M Willie Ross and Capt John A MacLellan. But in any case, a huge amount of information can now be gleaned from the internet, and I recommend you start your own research into this interesting topic at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pibroch>.

I devised this “shorthand” system for “The New Melody Directory – Highland Bagpipe” because “Pibroch” (which is the Anglicised spelling of the Gaelic word “Piobaireachd”) often use what are known as “cadences” (“long” gracenotes) in the “ground” or “urlar”. The “urlar” (a Gaelic word which means the “base” or “first part” or “primal theme”), is usually the ground upon which later variations are built. Some tunes adhere to this pattern, but others do not. Our NMD system requires you to remember only the first “phrase” of the tune – at most – to find the name of the tune in the NMD Volume 2.

Always wanting to keep my students minds agile, I enjoyed my time as Ross Campbell’s “fill-in” replacement while he went on leave from his duties at Scotch College in 1999. It was only a couple of weeks, but how I enjoyed the time – “yes sir, no sir” etc. Although this was almost my “last gasp” at playing a winded instrument, I got in the most practice I’d had in years. It was very exciting to be amongst students who actually wanted to learn, and not under so much pressure, although some of them had to sit for exams in piping at Year 12 level.

Ross had taught them very well, so I honed in upon their foibles, rather than their technique. Two of the older boys as was the rule, came in for their session, brimming with confidence since they already played well, and “slouched over” while they were playing in turns, seated at the table. So I asked them to stand up, and took the chairs away from them. Thus they remained for the rest of the lesson, for it does one no any good to slovenly slouch. When we “stand” to play on our practice chanters, we imitate the head position (and teeth and lip and cheek and neck control) we must foster in our playing of the full instrument.

I asked them to practice this at home in front of the bathroom mirror, so that they could see themselves. They should “stand tall” with the head looking straight ahead; the shoulders straight; elbows slightly out from the waist; teeth gripping the mouthpiece/blowpipe only lightly at the mouths centre, lips firm but not contorted; cheeks and throat not puffed excessively, and fingers not thrown out too far beyond what is necessary. All of these things a young player should be able to absorb from watching the good players they should listen to. I don’t think they had DVD’s at that stage, but they certainly had a great array of cassette tapes and some video’s on hand, of great bands and soloists.

I’ve also had the good fortune of being able to assist Doug Thoreson in his piping classes whilst I was living in Brisbane for a short time in 1995. His students all played well, but when he was away, they took to “slouching” for me, while playing complex tunes. One had his legs tightly coiled around each other. Again, I asked them to stand up, and to play while indicating the beats with their big toes without moving their feet.

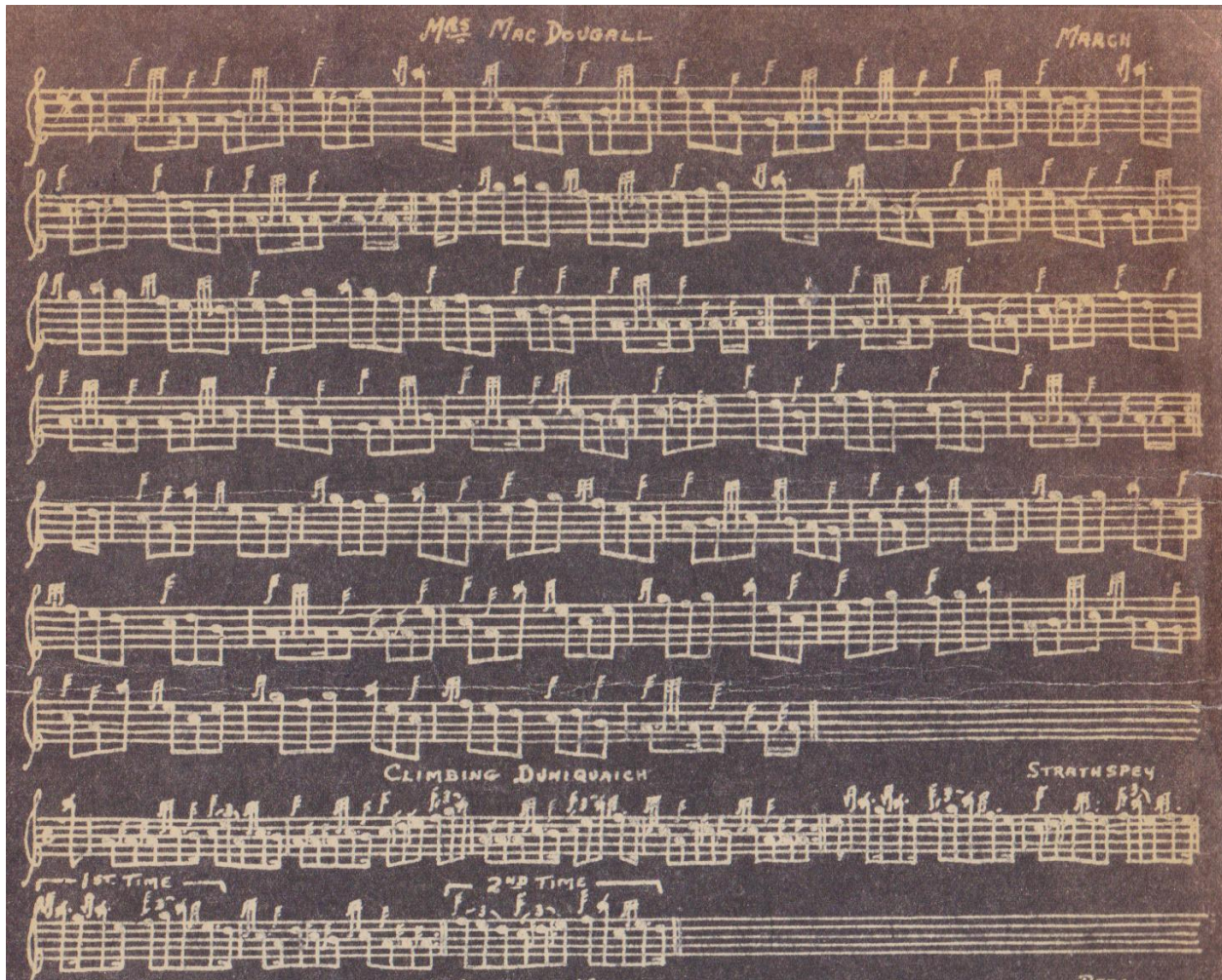
They couldn’t do it, much to my surprise. It was as if I’d asked them to rub their belly clockwise with one hand, and pat their head vertically with the other. Most people can do this with just a little practice. Others will take a bit longer, and a very few will never be able to do it. These things perhaps should be tested for in “musical aptitude tests”, I think, because it takes talent to switch these things on and off – at will. I pointed out to the boys that I had not seen Doug Thoreson do such a thing, but even if he did, he could do so, because he had such talent that “he could stand on his head and still play well” – but it remained for them to prove themselves first. The ability to indicate “time” or “rhythm” with the feet or hands is not always innate.

Another point Ross Campbell and I got into trouble for was when Ross, as the Vice Principal of Piping Victoria, wrote out “Massed Bands Tunes” for the VHPBA. He’d had the temerity (or so it was implied in the furore which erupted) to show introductory notes for “The Green Hills of Tyrol” which displaced the bar line (and strong beat) one beat to the right, as compared with say, the Scott’s Guards setting, which other’s took as “Gospel”. To my mind, when I considered it, I agreed with Ross, and said so.



Written music is after all only a guide, and we may play it as we will. I think that personally, I've always played and marched to that tune as Ross wrote it, when playing by myself. But in the Band, we played as per the Military books, and extended our first "E" an extra beat – so that the first "a" of the tune sounded as the left foot touched the ground. Materially it should not matter, since in 3/4 time, the strong beats alternate from left to right anyway. It's not a matter to get all pedantic and "hot under to collar" about ! "That game"... is about nuts for nits....

We've faced greater hurdles to our learning, like the long period when we relied on hand-written scores which crammed in as many bars as possible across the staff, to save space and paper, which was money. Such cramming does not assist our visual assimilation of the data into the "phrasing" which comes naturally with pipe tunes every two or four bars, which maximize the instruments capacity, with the limited facility (nine notes) we have to work with. See the 1950's "blueprint" hereunder, a couple of my first MHPB band tunes:



Note the white notes against the "blue" background; the notes are shown in "negative". Six bars are jammed together. The double bar lines at the end of each measure are hard to see.

Note also the old style of writing taorluaths etc which show the "redundant" Low A.

Show this to a young learner today, and you'll get a heap of questions, all of which are good for our general understanding of the instrument, and its development over hundreds of years.

Though these things are anachronistic as to our "light" music (the sort which is usually played in Pipe Bands and as ensembles with other instruments), they shed light on the musicality of piobaireachd and its interpretation, which originally was memorized by sung Gaelic "vocables" which indicated not only "pitch", but also the "movements" and their placement in each tune, as well as their "timing" – if the singer was/is musical. "That" was/is always the stumbling block !

**To the “make of a piper” go seven years of his\*<sup>1</sup> own learning and seven generations before – and blood, sweat and tears.**

*“If it is in, it will out”, as the Gaelic old-word says; “if not, let him\*<sup>1</sup> take to the net or sword”.*

Though folks there be who never foresee  
That the future holds anything pleasant  
Who grimly cast their eyes on the past  
And gaze all aghast on the present....  
The golden rule for sage or fool  
And prince and poet and peasant  
Is come what may at work or play  
To live, just live, for today with the future in mind !

*At the end of his\*<sup>1</sup> seven years one born to it will stand at the start of knowledge, and  
Leaning a fond ear to the drone\*<sup>2</sup>, he may have parley with old folks of old affairs.*

*Playing the tune of the "Fairy Harp", he can hear his forefolks, plaided in skins,  
Towsy-headed and terrible, grunting at the oars and snoring in the caves.*

*He has his whittle and club in the "Desperate Battle" (my own tune, my darling!),  
Where the white-haired sea-rovers are on the shore, and a stain's on the edge of the tide.*

*Or, trying his art on Laments, he can stand by the cairn of kings, ken the colour of Fingal's hair, and  
See the moon-glint on the hook of the Druids !*

NB: \*<sup>1</sup> = either “his” or “her”. NB: \*<sup>2</sup> “drone” = “the base” or “basic note” or “thematic tone”, or “ground” – and some even say “soul”.

NB: \*<sup>3</sup> “digger” = “soldier”.....

From my recent “googling” of the opening words of the above poem (which was sighted by me for the first time in many years, as a framed picture of a silhouetted “digger”\*<sup>3</sup> piper atop a sandbagged and dug in “command post”, machine guns visible also), I discovered once more (what was lost is once more “found”) that this evocative poem was taken from “THE LOST PIBROCH and other Sheiling-Stories”, by Neil Munro, 1899. Lest we forget !

It is surely a poem to make all of us ponder anew life’s “conundrums” as we are thrown “willy-nilly” from one catastrophe to another. What can we make of the latest earthquakes, underground volcanic eruptions and tsunami/tidal waves ? What do we make when we argue for “this” style or “that” ? How can we make a positive contribution to folk far away ? Prayers and “good wishes” help, of course, but “what to DO” ?

Whatever we do, whatever we learn, and however we work, it takes many years of training and practice to make good music. And it matters not whether we are male, or female. Some of us are “born to it”, but “at the end of seven years” we “still stand at the start of knowledge”, so that “leaning a fond ear to the drone” we “may have parley with” the wise – “old folks of wise affairs”.

That “Desperate Battle (my own tune, my darling)” will come to us – all – sooner or later – and that is why we (yes, both you and I) must “think well so that good things might happen”, so that we will be able to leap into the fray well prepared, with “no fear, and no regret” for what the consequences for us might be. Respectful discussion is the best course, not blinkered unthinking, non-thinking, for “when we ‘play’, we’re in touch with the past”. This sense of being “at one” with generations of long ago is totally unique. Long may the pipe sound, worldwide !

Some years ago, I was invited by the re-invigorated Pipers' Club to adjudicate in some solo competitions they had sponsored. Near the end, I judged a Learner Piobaireachd Competition. There were not all that many competitors, and I had no difficulty reaching my decision regarding the first place-getter. This boy had been trained by Ross Campbell, but Ross was not there; it may have even been a year or so after his retirement from Scotch College. However, as I was leaving, I was rudely accosted and rebuked by Eric Christie, who loudly demanded to know "do you know how that tune goes?" to which I responded "yes, I do!" I did not claim that the winning boy's tune was perfect, but only that I had made my decision based on his musical tone, and way of playing, which pleased me more than any of the others.

Now both Eric Christie and Ross Campbell are players I have respected very much for the quality of their playing, and for their success in competition at Open Grade, here and in New Zealand. Eric had arrived on the Victorian piping scene in the mid to late 1960's with a number of other very good players. Jack and Willie Taylor (a Scottish father and son team who settled in Colac), Ron Fleming also Scottish, and who soon moved to Brisbane, and Doug Thoreson, who like Eric originally hailed from New Zealand. Doug also soon moved to Brisbane as placed by the Army.

I am pleased for Eric that his hearing has recently been "restored" after his cochlea implants, because his hearing had been very bad for many years. I don't know if it was due to Eric and his unseemly behaviour in this instance that I was never invited to adjudicate again, but in any case, I myself had resigned from the panel years before. And why should I put up with that crap? Better "out" than "in" – otherwise I'd rather take to the net or sword!

Any judge must have a "thick hide" to be able to endure the "nay sayers" and "those who have been robbed". I did endure a good many more years as a judge after Willie Taylor had once had a "go" at me for awarding Wendy Gallagher 1<sup>st</sup> place in an Open Grade March, Strathspey and Reel Competition. He sent his emissary to fetch me to his car, and said that he "would not get out of the car, or" he "would knock me down". He said through clenched teeth "how can a young slip of a girl beat 'me' while I'm playing 'that' set?" – and went on to say that "if you held up a piece of paper between her and the crowd, no-one would have been able to hear her!"

Now Willie was a big man, a builder by trade, and very fit and strong. But unfortunately, after the death of his father, and as middle age overcame him, his hard work and lack of "a steadying hand" began to tell on his temper. Wendy was, as he said, a mere "wee slip of a girl", but she was a serious competitor, and had studied in New Zealand to perfect her art, and her piobaireachd playing. To my mind and to my ear, **musical expression and a musical instrument always win over an above muscle and brawn**, with its attendant coarseness. Was I wrong in my decision? Maybe. But should I (or any other judge – who are merely expressing individual preference) have to put up with such crap? Definitely not! And I myself will not collaborate in my own oppression! Unfortunately for us all, Wendy herself was lost to the piping fraternity, most likely because of these pressures. What a waste!

For myself, I've never been all that physically strong, and could never manage strong reeds. It was fortunate indeed that I had the wherewithal to learn how to adjust the "gut-buster" reeds given to me in bands, so that I could "manage". That gained me a reputation as a "weak blower" who played a "soft instrument". But it also gained me "10/10 for Tone and Tuning" from RU Brown in 1972. "Fluke or not", I still stand tall by that assessment, given before the Korg Electronic Tuner came into being. And I don't have to apologize to anyone for my playing, either, according to P/M Angus MacDonald, who stayed with me for a week when he visited Melbourne in 1987. And I have the correspondence to prove it, from Redford Bank, Colinton.

To sum up: I was totally unprepared for what happened to me during my only visit to Scotland in the May 2000. My friend and I bussed it up to Edinburgh from London, and hired a car there. After visiting Balmoral Castle, and the sights thereabouts, I myself felt “*rage*” when I visited the Earl on Mansfield’s Palace at Scone. I happened to read something there which inflamed my imagination, and outraged my sensibilities. Thus, I had the great pleasure of playing on my miniature bagpipe (taken with me from Australia for my trip to the U.K.) the tune for the words of the Scottish “People’s Poet”, Robbie Burns – “A Man’s a Man for a’ that” (meaning: a man’s *just* a man for all that !), and hoping that his “Lordship the Earl” had heard it !

What I had read, under glass, from the pages of an old book, presumably opened at random, was that “the palace had been extended, but unfortunately, the local village spoiled the Earl’s views, so the village was shifted some distance away, and the rent increased”. This time coincided with the disbanding of the Clan system, and changes which forced common folk to seek a living elsewhere, virtually “thrown out on their ear”. Cold comfort indeed for the dispossessed. And cold comfort too for the displaced native peoples of Australia. All were between a rock and a hard place.

I *felt* the injustice 200 years later. And I have my name only which is Scottish. The rest of me is English, Irish, French and Norwegian, as far as I know ! I can truly say “I am of pure ‘Mongrel’ breed, but I was born and raised in this land Australia. This is the land I love, and call home”.

### **A Man’s A Man For All That** (Robert Burns, Scotland 25/1/1759 – 21/7/1796) English Editing, Donald Chalmers, Australia.

*Is there, for honest poverty  
That hangs his head and all that;  
The coward slave, we pass him by,  
We dare be poor for all that !  
For all that, and all that,  
Our toils obscure, and all that,  
The rank is but gold money’s stamp,  
The Man’s but gold for all that.*

*What though on homely fare we dine,  
Wear the drab grey, and all that;  
Give fools their silks, and knaves their wine,  
A man’s a man for all that !  
For all that, and all that,  
Their tinsel show, and all that;  
The honest man, though ever so poor,  
Is king of men for all that !*

*You see that fellow, called a lord,  
Who struts, and stares, and all that;  
Though hundreds worship at his word,  
He’s but a fool for all that.  
For all that, and all that,  
His riband, star, and all that,  
The man of independent mind  
He looks and laughs at all that.*

*A king can make a belted knight,  
A marquis, duke, and all that;  
But an honest man’s above his might,  
Good faith, he mustn’t fall for that !  
For all that, and all that,  
Their dignities, and all that,  
The pith of sense, and pride of worth,  
Are higher rank than all that.*

*Then let us pray that come it may –  
As come it will for all that –  
That sense and worth, over all the earth,  
May bear the prize, and all that.  
For all that, and all that,  
It’s coming yet for all that,  
That man to man, the world over,  
Shall brothers be for all that !*

...

That’s it folks, you’ve heard it all from the horse’s mouth ! There’s many a could be, a like to be, or a wanna be, but if you ain’t got social graces and a modicum of humility, then it’s most likely that you’ll be a never be.

But a stitch in time saves nine (or so it is said).  
Cut the cloth to measure, sew it up, and enjoy !

***You see that fellow, called a lord, Who struts, and stares, and all that; Though hundreds worship at his word, He’s but a fool for all that.***

And now a word from a self acknowledged but humble “Peter Pan”, speaking of “**The New Melody Directory – Highland Bagpipe**” in 1987:

*“You and Bob McCullough must have the patience of two saints. This must be the penultimate in piping directories and an excellent reference it is” ...., and **Pipe Major Angus MacDonald** continued.... “I’m actually practicing seriously at my stage of life – first time ever (age comes even to the Peter Pan’s of this world)” .... “I’ll never forget coming upon that family of kangaroos the day we left the old home” (my parent’s home in country Victoria). “Funny how things stick in your mind” .... And talking about being beaten by two Canadian Bands at the “World’s” ....”Once again our colonial cousins have given us a boot up the bottom, which I admit, we needed very badly. We have been in a bit of a rut over the last four or five years” ....  
“Thanks again for your present and letters. Every success with your books although they should sell well; genius must out !”*

This recommendation comes from a great player, who wrote to me with his “old Parker ink pen”. He says “I won it in a place called Sharjah in the Persian Gulf for winning the Battalion Three Mile Race (but not in Olympic time, I might add !)” .... He adds “I often play the tapes you gave me on the Balmoral difference and find that I like that style more than anything else” .... “I have started back to compete after a period of almost five years. My hand is a little stronger than it was, and it would seem I’m still capable of the odd tune yet” .... “Please find enclosed a hornpipe I made for a little friend of mine called Rab Kelly; also a tune called the Viennese Waltz by my cousin Allan MacDonald. This might put you ahead of the pack for a few weeks” ....  
“Remember when you get a bit older you will regret not having had a go (in Scotland) in your youth” .

I’m sorry to say that I have misplaced the tunes sent to me in his letter, but will include them with this “Revised Tutor” when I find them.

Also lost under my “old” filing system are a number of appreciative letters, most of them from the United States or Canada. But here is one I have turned up from Joe Stapleton from May 1995: “Your “Tutor” is a very nicely done book. I especially liked your use of the finger charts which is similar to Joseph MacDonald’s 1763 book. I suspect it would be much simpler for a beginner to follow along than with other methods. Breaking into the world piping market is not easy from here either. Jim Coldren, author of the first (1966) “Bagpipe Music Index” is a good friend and has told many tales of woe. Thank you also for the additional pages of A. R. MacLeod, I’m also sending on that information to Roderick Cannon, author of the “**Bibliography of Bagpipe Music**”. I suspect the letters in the front of the book were meant to have been a testimonial but were probably less enthusiastic than MacLeod wanted. Strange that they were still included in the second edition.”

I, having already heard the call of the pipes in my first year of school, like many another child (but knowing nothing of the horrors of war), thrilled to the poetry of **John Greenleaf Whittier**, when in Grade 3, we recited “**The Pipes of Lucknow**” (*Dinna ye hear it ?*). Whittier was an American who lived in the 19th century. The Siege of Lucknow took place during the Indian Mutiny in 1857-58. The siege lasted from 2 July until 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1857. Lest we forget ! It was co-incidentally remembered by me as I penned this last “Z” page of my piping memoirs, so it seems fit to humbly conclude:

Like the march of soundless music, Through the vision of the seer, More of feeling than of hearing, Of the heart than of the ear, To the cottage and the castle, This piper’s song is clear.... Sweet sounds the ancient piobaireachd, O’er mountain, glen, and glade; But the sweetest of all music  
The pipes of Chalmers’ played !

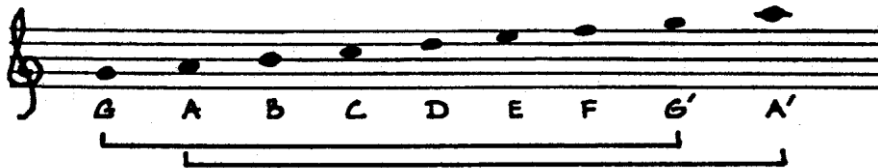
**Section 1** (Continued).

The “**Terminology**”, or “**Jargon**”, are “**Terms Used**” by Pipers in the writing of Highland Bagpipe Music.

Some of the following definitions may already be familiar to most of you who play another instrument some are peculiar to pipe music. Those definitions not commonly encountered in pipe music are not given here, as it is expected that if you want to study the theory of music in depth, or at a higher level, then you will take advantage of other music theory books available.

**Pitch:** All music depends on the combination of certain notes, higher and lower in pitch than each other. The height or depth of musical sound is called pitch.

**Staff** (or Stave). A set of five (5) parallel, equidistant lines is called a staff or stave. The notes low in pitch are shown towards the bottom of the staff, while those notes of higher pitch are shown towards the top of the staff. The notes are written either on the lines, or in the space between the lines. The pipe scale consists of 9 notes, and these are traditionally shown and named as indicated below. Tradition also “demands” that the symbol  $\text{G}$  or “treble” clef be shown at the left hand side of each staff (to indicate that the notes in this range are “higher” in pitch than the “drone” sound).



**Octave:** You will have noticed that G and A appear twice on the staff above – the lower G and A are called “Low G” and “Low A”, while the higher G and A are called “High G” and “High A” (G’ and A’ in this book). There is said to be an octave between G and G’ and A and A’. As the name suggests, there are eight notes between each pair, counting both the first and the last notes. If both G and G’ or A and A’, are played together (provided the chanter is ‘set’ correctly - see later) the two notes will blend very well together so that it will, be difficult for you to distinguish between the two sounds. No other combination of notes will blend as well, as a little experience will show. This is the reason why two notes, an octave apart, are given the same name. However, all of the notes sounded by the bagpipe should chord well.

**Note Values:** *Note: The “stems” of melody notes are now generally placed to the left of each notes “head”. But this is neither here, nor there. See Page 9.*

In any music, not only the pitch, but also the length of each note in the combination of notes, called the melody or ‘tune’, has to be shown, so that other musicians may reproduce the melody. The longest note in common use today is called a “semi-breve”( or “whole note”.) The next longest note is called a minim, and is exactly  $\frac{1}{2}$  the length of a semi-breve, etc.

*Note: The “stems” of melody notes are now generally placed to the left of each notes “head”. But this is neither here, nor there. See Page 9.*

<u>NOTES</u>	<u>NAMES</u>	<u>VALUES</u>
	Semi-breve	(1) Whole note.
	Minim	( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) Half note.
	Crochet	( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) Quarter note.
	Quaver	(1/8) Eighth note.
	Semiquaver	(1/16) Sixteenth note.
	Demisemiquaver	(1/32) Thirtysecond note.

The divisional values of the notes are represented thus:

A semibreve is equal in length to



Two minims

or

Four crochets

or

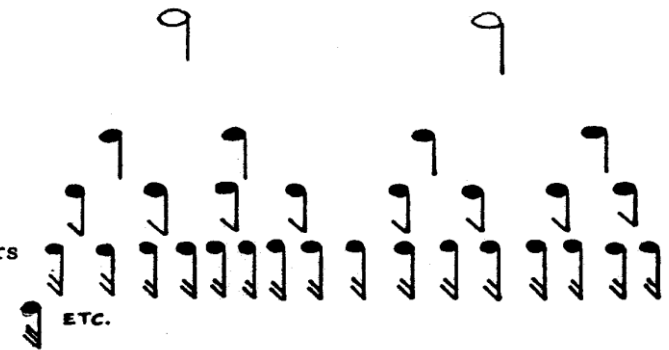
Eight quavers

or


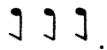
Sixteen semiquavers

or

Thirty-two demisemiquavers.



Apart from the “bar Lines”, the vertical lines in the previous notes are called “stems”, while the straight short lines from the lower ends of each stem are called “tails”.













Quavers, semiquavers, and demisemiquavers often have their tails joined in this manner  instead of .

**Dotted Notes:** In order to increase the value of a note, a dot is placed after it, i.e.

(1) A dot placed after a note increases its length value by half.

(11) A further dot may be added to the existing dot; the second dot being equal in proportion to half the value of the first dot. However this is rarely encountered in pipe music.

e.g.

(1) A dotted semibreve		equals		or	
A dotted minim		"		or	
A dotted crochet		"		or	
A dotted quaver		"		or	

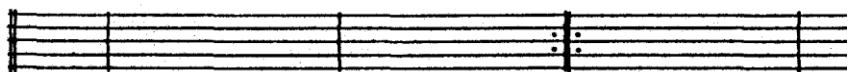
ETC.

**Bar Lines:**

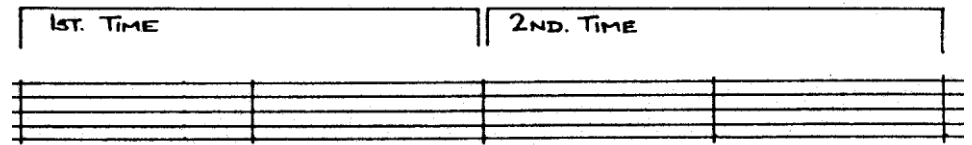
Bar lines are the short upright lines drawn across the stave at regular intervals. They are used to divide the music up into equal portions called bars or measures. They are also used to indicate the position of the strong beat or accent.

**Repeat Passages:**

These are indicated by placing dots by the side of double bar lines as indicated. When the dots are placed to the left of double bar lines it indicates that the music from the preceding double bar lines is to be repeated. If dots are placed to the right of the double bar lines it indicates that the music from that set of double bar lines to the following double bar lines is to be played through, and then repeated. E.g:



After frequent repeating, or change of part on a repeated passage the different ending or part may be indicated as follows:


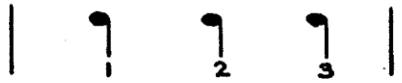



There are also other ways to indicate repeat passages or bars, but the above would be two of the most common encountered.


**Beat Notes:** *Note: The “stems” of melody notes are now generally placed to the left of each notes “head”. But this is neither here, nor there. See Page 9 etc.*

The beat note is the basic note of each bar or measure. These notes represent the number of beats or Counts to each bar of music.

e.g.

	Simple duple time Two beat notes.
	Simple triple time Three beat notes.
	Simple quadruple time Four beat notes.

The same number of beat notes would also exist in Duple, Triple, and Quadruple compound time, **except that the time value of each beat note is increased by half of its value (ie by a “dot”).** (See Compound Time.) Eg:

	In “Compound Time” (where there are two beats in this example), each beat is “dotted” and therefore divisible by three.
---	---

**Accents:**

There are some notes in music which receive more stress or emphasis than others. This is called the “ACCENT”, the strongest “pulse” or accent always occurring immediately after the bar line.

e.g. (see next page) in **SIMPLE TIME:**

SIMPLE TIME

IN "DUPLÉ TIME", (Simple) There are **Two** "quarter note" crotchet beats per bar – ie  $2 \times \frac{1}{4}$  notes the accents are strong, weak The "accents" are shown here as "S", "W").

In SIMPLE TRIPLE TIME, There are **Three** crotchet beats per bar), When there are three beats in the bar the accents are strong, weak, weak.

In (Simple) QUADRUPLE TIME, There are **Four** crotchet beats per bar). When there are four beats in the bar the accents are strong, weak, medium, weak. (abbreviated here as "S", "W", "M", "W")

**NOTE:** When the beat note of the group note is divided, the accent occurs on the first.

**DEFINITIONS IN MUSIC:**

A Triplet:

**TEMPO:** Tempo is the speed at which a piece of music is played. **That is, "x" beats per minute. A handy guide to tempo is now included on page 79.**

**PITCH:** Pitch is the height or depth of a sound.

**TONE:** Tone is quality of sound.

**SYNCOPIATION:** Sometimes the accent is transferred to a part of the bar not normally accented, causing SYNCOPIATION, This is the breaking or disturbance of the normal rhythm by accenting beats not normally accented,

**TRIPLET:** A "triplet" is a group of three notes of equal value played in the time of two for the same value. **In Pipe playing these will normally of different pitch (Higher of lower than each other – but shown here as the "same" for convenience sake only. A "Triplet" is:**

**A TIME SIGNATURE,**

"Time" is indicated in music by two figures called the TIME SIGNATURE. These figures are placed one above the other at the beginning of any piece of music. In "Simple Time" the "upper" figure indicates the **number** of beats in each bar, and the **lower** figure shows the "value" of each of these beats as portion of a semibreve. In "Compound Time" the "upper" figure indicates the "number of divisions" in each bar, and the **lower** figure shows the "value" of each of these beats as portion of a semibreve. Only the time signatures commonly encountered in pipe music are explained, as follows:

When the beat notes consist of a simple portion of a semibreve such as a MINIM, CROCHET, or QUAVER, the time is called SIMPLE, This is where the beat note is of an "undotted value", and divisible by two (or four).

In Simple Time the top figure of the time signature indicates the NUMBER of beats in the bar, whereas the bottom figure indicates the VALUE of the beat note. The top figure will be either 2, 3 or 4.

**(Double Time)**

Eg: Simple Duple

2 Minims, or  $\frac{1}{2}$  Notes  
2 Crotchets, or Quarter Notes

Simple Triple, and Simple Quadruple time may be taken from the examples in the left hand column – ie  $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{4}{4}$ .

**COMPOUND TIME.**

When the beat consists of dotted notes the time is referred to as COMPOUND. This is where the beat note is of a dotted value, and divisible by 3 into three equal parts. **That is, a dotted quarter note = three quavers.**

In compound time, **the top figure** indicates the Number of Divisions of the beats in each bar. Whereas **the bottom figure** of the time signature indicates the value of the divisions – ie half (minim), quarternote (crotchet).

The "top figure" will either be 6, 9, 12, and sometimes even 15. To find the **number of beats** in the bar from a **compound time signature**, **divide the top figure by 3.** To find the **value of the beat note**, **divide the bottom figure by 2 and "add a dot".**

e.g.

**COMPOUND DUPLÉ.**


6 QUAVERS or  $\frac{1}{8}$  Notes.

**COMPOUND TRIPLE.**

9 Quavers or  $\frac{1}{8}$  Notes.



## **MELODY NOTES:** -

In pipe music, these are ALWAYS written with the “stem” pointing downwards, as shown  and with a fairly large “head”.


These notes must be “fingered correctly” as described in the next section. (i.e. as you learn to finger the notes in the scales.) As the name suggests, the melody notes make up the melody or tune.

“False fingering” of the notes which make up the tune or melody “jar” the listeners ears, since those notes correctly played are “tuned” to “chord” with the unwavering basic pitch of the drones.

Such “tunefulness” is fundamental to being able to play well. To do so requires some years of regular and thoughtful practice, and proper maintenance of the instrument, reeds etc.

The hypnotic effect of a properly tuned instrument depends largely on the ability of the player, although modern methods and the “electronic tuner” since the early 1970’s have improved standards “across the board”. Good players should have the intelligence to quickly adopt a new approach, even if it flies in the face of “tradition”.


**GRACE NOTES:** - These are very short notes (mostly written as “demi-semi-quavers” which have three tails), used to “embellish” the melody notes, and may be combined in various combinations to form “doublings” etc, further described in the next section. They do not alter the basic melody, but merely make it more interesting.

Gracenotes are made obvious by the fact that their stems always point upwards, as shown  and that their “head” is small. These notes may be performed by the raising or lowering of one finger as explained more fully in the next section.

**PARTS:** - A. “part” is that portion of a tune contained between two successive double bar lines. In 2/4, 3/4 and 6/8 **pipe** tunes, tradition demands that there be 8 bars (to be repeated) in each part. In 2/2 and 4/4 **pipe** tunes, tradition demands that there be 4 bars (to be repeated) in each part.

See “Musical Theory Continued” in Section 5. Section 1, Page 5

Exceptions to these “rules” are rarely encountered. In general, there are either 2, 4 or 6 parts in each tune, and a tune with 8 parts is considered long indeed. Three parted tunes are rarely encountered; and some of these are added to later by other composers, to “complete them”.

**PAUSE MARK:** - The symbol  placed above any note indicates that that note should be held longer (at the player's discretion) than shown.

**PRACTICE GOOSE:** - This is a pipe bag (preferably the size you will play in the bagpipe, and preferably “full size”) fitted with a blowpipe and practice chanter only. I recommend that every learner purchase one before he/she graduates to playing (or attempting to play) the full pipe.

To learn the rudiments of blowing the goose, until a steady sound is obtained, will save you (and your neighbours) much frustration and agony.

I have found that an “Alexander Long Practice Chanter” fitted to the goose to be a good investment, as it gives you the “feel” of a full size pipe chanter, since it has wider spacing between holes.

I fitted a couple of extra features which proved their worth with pupils. These were extra “ports” fitted into the bag, so that air can be leaked out. This increases the volume of air required to be blown in, and increases the required pressure of the left arm to keep the chanter to its correct pitch.

The other port was to enable a portable “water manometer” to be fitted, so that pupils could view any pressure variations between breaths. In this way, pupils are incrementally made more competent, so that when they graduate to the full bagpipe, they will already have the “feel of it”.

**SHARP, FLAT:** - To “sharpen” a note, means to raise its pitch. To “flatten” a note, means to lower its pitch. Therefore, if a note is too “sharp”, then its pitch is too high, and it must be “flattened”. If a note's pitch is too “flat”, then its pitch is too low, and its pitch must be “raised” or “sharpened”.

The “scale” of the Great highland Bagpipe is more properly shown as compared to the modern **Equal Tempered (Piano) Keyboard** in the newly added **Section 5, pages 31 - 33**. These are only two of the many equally valid scales played worldwide, but a tuned bagpipe is hard to beat. The ancients of old knew what they were doing when they created “piobaireachd” the “classical” music of the pipes, for “hypnotic effect”.

**Section 2: Concise Tutor for Practice Chanter 1973/2012 Page 6**

Please read through Section 1 of this booklet before reading any further.

Most Pipers hold the left hand at the top of the chanter as shown in the diagram hereunder, the right hand at the bottom of the chanter; they are known as “right handed” players.

Whether you are “right” or “left handed”, I strongly urge that you first try to play “right handed”, and only if you fail in this, should you resort to playing “left handed”, in which case the hand positions shown in the diagram are reversed.

Right handed Pipers always play the pipes on the left shoulder. Some left handed Pipers play on the right shoulder; obviously this presents some difficulty in playing in a Band. This point should be well considered.

Scotlands Military Highland Pipe Bands “require” left handed pipers to play with the drones on the left shoulder for the sake of uniformity of appearance, and to avoid the clashing of drones in countermarching.

This can present problems for the player however, as the left arm would then be required to go right around the bag and down to the bottom holes of the chanter. This usually results in the chanter being pulled “off-center” to the left, and makes it more difficult to “strike up” and to sound “E” with the rest of the left-shoulder right-handed players.

Although no pictures of fingering positions were possible in the 1973 edition of the booklet, it was, and still is expected that you will be able to make use of other tutors to gain a “rounded” education. Thanks to the ease of modern technology, pictures are now included – Section 7 pgs 35-7.

Note that the fingers should be held fairly “straight” (you are not playing a flute !), but not rigidly so. The thumb of the right hand should lightly grip the rear of chanter between the D & C fingers (see below). Also note that the fingers should not be thrown “too far” from the chanter when full melody notes are played. On the other hand, the holes should not be “smothered” by fingers which are not raised sufficiently.

The scale and the fingering positions may be represented as below, when X means that that particular hole is closed, and 0 means that that particular hole must be open, to properly play that note.

Note that the lowest “hole” and its corresponding finger is called the “A” hole, and the “A” finger. Low G is sounded when all the holes are closed as shown “x”. The High A (thumb finger is shown “offset” to the left.

Now see photographs of correct hand -holding positions in Section 7 Pages 35 – 37.

	LOW G	LOW A	B	C	D	E	F	HIGH G	HIGH A	C	G
THUMB (A FINGER)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	X	X
INDEX (B FINGER)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	X	0
MIDDLE (C FINGER)	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	0	0	X	0
RING (D FINGER)	X	X	X	0	0	X	X	X	X	0	X
SMALL (E FINGER)	X	X	X	0	0	X	X	X	X	0	X
RIGHT H	X	0	0	CLOSED	X	0	0	0	0	OPEN	CLOSED

ALTERNATE METHOD OF PLAYING \* (for C and G)

The Low G hole is the one at the bottom of the practice chanter. The holes on the chanter are shown either “o” (open), or “x” (closed)

Open C Closed High G

Note that although an “alternate method playing “C” & “High G” has been shown, this is not recommended for a beginner — ie. should only be used when the habit of someone who has played in this manner requires it, and then only for short notes. Another method has been used in the past to play High A, but this has deliberately been omitted, and again, should not be used, unless previously acquired “habit” requires it.

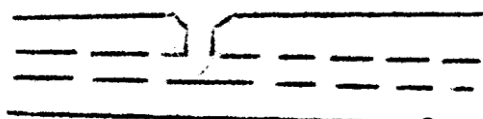
Now you may pick up the chanter, and place all fingers on it as shown in the diagram, taking care to hold fingers “straight”, and relaxed, much as you would do after having first “shaken” them. “Blow”, and if all holes are covered properly, “Low G” will sound. “Take a breath” (ie. stop blowing for a moment) and then “try again” (ie. “blow”) to (hopefully) once again sound Low G. Do this several times, and try to get the “feel” of the chanter and its holes, so that with practice, you can pick up the chanter and quickly arrange your fingers so that all holes are lightly covered.

DON'T ATTEMPT AT THIS STAGE TO PROCEED FROM ONE NOTE TO THE NEXT WHILE BLOWING. See also new photographs—Section 9 pages 35 - 7.

From the beginning, the chanter should be held in as relaxed a manner as possible. If the chanter is held vertically and lightly with all fingers on their named holes, and your grip is slightly relaxed, then the chanter should begin to slip downwards. The stronger your “grip” the less “control” you will have over your fingers, which should be “relaxed” so that they can quickly respond to your “thought melody” requirements.

Pick up the chanter again, tenderly, and arrange all fingers on the holes of the chanter as shown for “Low A” in the diagram on Page 6. Now blow, end sound “Low A”. Stop, and re-arrange fingers several times to sound “Low A” to get “the feel” of the chanter, and to fix its sound in your head.

**HINT:** If at this stage you are having difficulty in feeling the holes, try “countersinking” the holes, ie.



In the same manner, try to play “B”, “C”, etc. to “High A” and “Low G”, and keep practicing like this until you are confident that no holes will be left partially uncovered when they are supposed to be closed. And “fix the sound” of each note firmly in your head, so that you can “name them”, when each one is heard, in any order.

You may now attempt to “blow”, and sound the scale from Low G, Low A, B etc, without stopping to take a breath. The finger movements to do this are analyzed hereunder. It should be noted again that **each finger is given the name of the note which sounds when that finger is the top finger raised**. For example, “F” — the thumb and top finger of the left hand are on the top two holes — air proceeds down the chanter to the third top hole (which is the top hole open) and escapes, sounding F. That hole is therefore called the F hole, and that raised finger is called F finger.

Referring to the diagram on Page 6, and photographs on pages 35 – 37:

**Low G to Low A** – Sound Low G and then, merely lift the little finger of the right hand (the “Low A” finger) to Sound Low A.

**Low A to B** – Sound Low A, and then lift the B finger to sound “B” (note that both “B & A” fingers are now off the chanter).

**B to C** – Sound B, and then lift the “C” finger and lower the “A” **Simultaneously** (at the same time – ie one “up” and one “down”).

**Common faults in the progression from B to C** are to

- (a) raise the “C” finger first (thereby sounding a flattened “open C”) and then — lowering the “A” finger which sharpens the pitch of C, or
- (b) lower “Low A” finger (thereby sounding a flattened B) then raising the C finger to sound the correctly pitched “Closed C”.

It should be noted that although when practicing on the practice chanter (a) or (b) above, etc, “false” fingering is hard to distinguish by listening to practice chanter sound, a quite a noticeable effect is produced when “false fingering” is played like this on the bagpipe chanter. A point to learn from this is that **you should look and listen**, particularly while learning. “Correct fingering” (as learned in the “scale” – see page 6) is important !

**C to D** – Play C (Closed C) and merely lift your D finger to play D.

**D to E** – The hard one. Sound D, and then simultaneously

- (a) Raise E finger
- (b) Lower D, C, and B fingers
- (c) Raise Low A finger

**Note that** no other notes should be heard between D and E. It may be a help to practice the movements silently before actually attempting to blow and sound the notes.

The sounding of other notes between D and E (commonly referred to as making “crossing noises”) is a common mistake, and should be eliminated. It can occur when either

- (a) the A finger is not lifted quickly enough so that Low G is sounded between D and E.
- (b) the E finger is not lifted quickly enough so that Low A is sounded between D and B.

It should also be noted that the raising of the E finger before the lowering of D, C, B fingers and raising the raising of the Low A finger, is not permissible (even though Low G or Low A crossing noises are not heard), as this constitutes “false fingering”. Actually, if E is played with the little finger “on” (ie. Low A finger), the E will not sound as a true E note, but will be slightly flatter ([this, though, might depend on which reed/chanter](#)) on the full instrument, and can easily be heard on a well tuned bagpipe.

**E to F** – Sound E, and then raise F finger to play F.

**F to High G** – Sound F, then raise High G finger to play High G (or G’).

**High G (G’) to High A (A’)** – Sound High G, then simultaneously raise your High A finger (A’ thumb finger) and “lower” your E finger.

**Note that** it is not permissible to either

- (a) raise A’ finger, (playing false A’ thus having no fingers of the left hand on the chanter) and then, place E finger onto chanter.

(b) place E finger on chanter (playing false G’) and then raising A’ finger/thumb.

When you are confident that you can play from note to note (without crossing noises etc), try playing “up the scale” without taking a breath (and down again). It is important that you should recognize the notes on the staff by sight as quickly as possible (ie. without counting up the lines etc). This can only be done by a lot of practice.

You must remember that in tunes (which you will play eventually), you will encounter all the combinations of the notes possible, so that you should practice eg. Low G to all other notes, Low A to all other notes etc, as shown below. [On blank manuscript paper](#), fill in the other lines as part of your practice. For a start, take a breath between each group (or pair of notes), and when you can play them properly, practice to the end of each measure without taking a breath.

Watch (ie look and listen) for example, to your playing or sounding of **Low G to B**: your A and B fingers must be raised together (as “one” !) **Low G to E**: your A and E fingers must be raised together (as “one” !) etc....

### 1. Low G to all other notes



### 2. Low A to all other notes.



**To be completed by each learner:**

B to all other notes...

C to all other notes...

D to all other notes...

E to all other notes...

F to all other notes...

G' to all other notes...

A' to all other notes...

When you have mastered the above try the following concentrating on correct fingering — ignore the bars and beats for the time being.

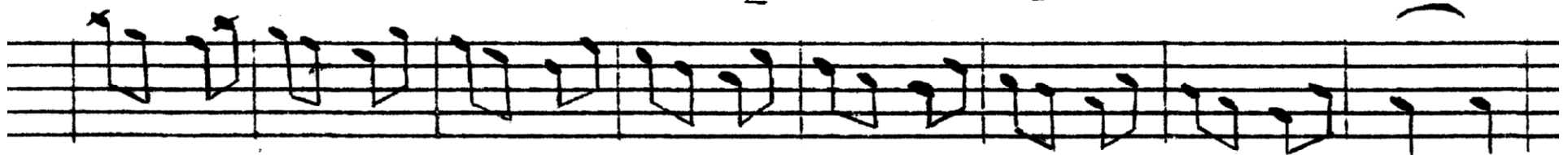
*Note: As I've mentioned previously, the "stems" of melody notes are now generally placed to the left of each notes "head", which is inclined upwards from left to right, as you will note in modern notation, printed books etc.*

*The examples shown here were written in 1973, followed in the Australian tradition of my tutors. However, new pupils should not themselves follow in this style. When you are writing out your exercises as suggested here, please make the mental correction as you write out each note.*

*As you write out the exercises yourself, you will slowly and surely learn, understand, and memorize notes and their values, and play the exercises correctly. This is an exercise (discipline) that you cannot afford to miss !*




Now write out this exercise "back to front" (and play it) [IE AS FOLLOWS]



**GRACENOTES:**

Gracenotes are necessary to "embellish" melody notes, which are shown with their stems downwards, as you have seen on previous pages.

Gracenotes are shown with their stems upwards thus:—  with three "tails", showing that they are notes of very short duration (they are conventionally written with 3 tails, and are thus represented as being 1/32 of a semi breve — ie. as demi-semi-quavers).

However [Seamas MacNeill](#), through his work as a physicist, revealed to us lesser mortals in 1956 that these notes are in reality about 1/64 semi breve). See also refs to "pianola rolls" Sections 5 and 6, pages 32 and 34.

The time taken for single gracenotes or "combinations" of gracenotes (generally described as "movements"), are not taken into account when writing bagpipe music, so that only the melody notes (whose stems point downwards) must be added to obtain the "timing" (length) of each bar.

It should be noted that the strong beat which follows each bar-line falls on the **1st note or gracenote (which ever is the first)** after it. Similarly for each beat within the bar. But more of that later.

It is also important to note that gracenotes may be played, by lifting only one finger to play that note eg. the High G finger to play G' gracenote. If melody notes were played in this way, you would be told you were "false fingering", because the pitch of the correct notes would be distorted.

## “High G” Gracenotes from Low G “up” the Scale:

“G” Gracenote on Low G      ETC →

## “High G” Gracenotes from Low G “up” the Scale:

In all the above cases the “High G” finger is raised to open G’ hole (and thus play G’) and replaced quickly – ie “Up, Down” as in “1, 2” (as you would say it in reciting the numbers “1, 2, 3, 4, 5” – evenly), to play the following note.

**All gracenotes should be practised by lifting the particular finger up and off the chanter by about one finger thickness — ie. about 1.5cm”. As you progress to play gracenotes more quickly, the said finger must still be raised by the same amount.**

In Highland Bagpipe Music, it is a common (and serious) error to “slur” gracenotes by not clearing the gracenote finger sufficiently from the chanter. The pitch of the gracenote sounded would then be seriously distorted to an unacceptable level.

It should be noted that the method of playing from one note to the next, with a “High G” gracenote, is to play the first (melody) note, then the second, and at the same time raise the G’ gracenote finger, so that, as the G’ hole is the highest hole open, G’ will sound, until the G’ finger is

lowered, to sound the second (melody) note (see diagram above).

It is also important to realize that you can’t play a G’ gracenote on G’ (because you are already playing G’); similarly, you cannot play a D gracenote on D, E gracenote on E etc.

In the exercise above, this problem has been solved. (from F to G’) by playing A’ gracenote (ie. “High A” or “thumb” gracenote) as shown.

Since A’ is the highest note possible, G’ to A’ is played without a gracenote – in this exercise.

**If you have not already done so, you should take a look at the new Section 7 Pages 35 – 37** which demonstrate the correct handling of the chanter: If the right hand thumb is positioned “too far up” – towards or beyond the D hole, control is lost, and the (unblown) chanter will “tip” outwards. If the right hand thumb is positioned “too far downwards” towards or below the C hole, the right hand is “locked” with detrimental loss of free movement of the fingers.



A' G' NOTE

X	O	X	O	X	O	X	X	O	X	O	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	O
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

ETC. (fill in)

ETC. (fill in)

You should be able (by now) to fill in the above blanks, having seen the pattern established i.e. play the first note, then the second (melody notes) simultaneously lifting the gracenote finger, so that being the highest hole open, the gracenote will sound — then replace gracenote finger on chanter to sound second note (fingers already in position for this).

The combination of the G' D E Gracenotes (always in this Order) is very common — so you should practise this as written below:—

From what you have learnt above, fill in the finger positions (x and o) on blank paper, and then practice, slowly at first, playing G', D, and E gracenotes “evenly”, much as you would say “1, 2, 3” (as you would recite “one, two, three, four, five” etc in numeric single syllable sequence, or as in “a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h” in single syllable “alphabetical” sequence, without giving emphasis to any – i.e. giving all named notes “equal emphasis”). Look and listen – each gracenote finger in turn should be raised by approximately one finger thickness, so that each gracenote has the same length.



Now practice the below - being the same as the above, but with different “timing”, which is also commonly encountered, particularly in 6/8 Marches:



If you filled out the fingering positions you would find them to be exactly the same as in the previous exercise - the only difference being in the timing. Note that the first note of each group of three is “dotted” – ie held a little longer, while the second note in each group is “cut” – ie has an extra “tail” – so that the overall timing is not affected. [Please](#) re-read the notes on pages 2, 3 and 4 re note “values” [if you are unsure of this](#).

You may find it easier to think of this “held and cut “ timing as follows, by saying 1,2,3 (pause) 1,2,3 etc, or by imagining how you would walk if you built up your right heel so that your right leg is slightly longer than the left..... your left foot will come down hard as in the “**One**” in the group.

Having mastered the above (correct “timing”, NO “crossing noises” (ie no unintended, extraneous sounds, correct “fingering”), you may proceed to the next exercises, which are the same examples as shown on page 9, but with gracenotes “added”.



Note that each group is written “evenly” (so play it evenly, as in “1, 2, 3, 4; 1, 2, 3, 4 etc.....ie G A B G, A B C A, B C D B, etc....

Now play the reverse ([A' G' F A', G' F E G', F E D F.....](#)):



So far you have learned that gracenotes may be “completed”, “performed”, or “done” by lifting the gracenote finger about ½ “ (or 1.5cm) off the chanter, and replacing it quickly to “sound” or “play” the final note in the sequence. If you think about it, why couldn’t you make a gracenote by “striking” (or “touching” or “lowering”) the gracenote finger, or fingers on the chanter, and lift again to sound the final note ? The “answer” is of course, that you can. However, the name usually given to this type of gracenote is “shake” or “strike” for obvious reasons.

Some “shakes” commonly encountered are:

**Concise Tutor for Practise Chanter** by Donald Chalmers 1973, [updated in blue in 2012](#), **Sec 2 Page 13**



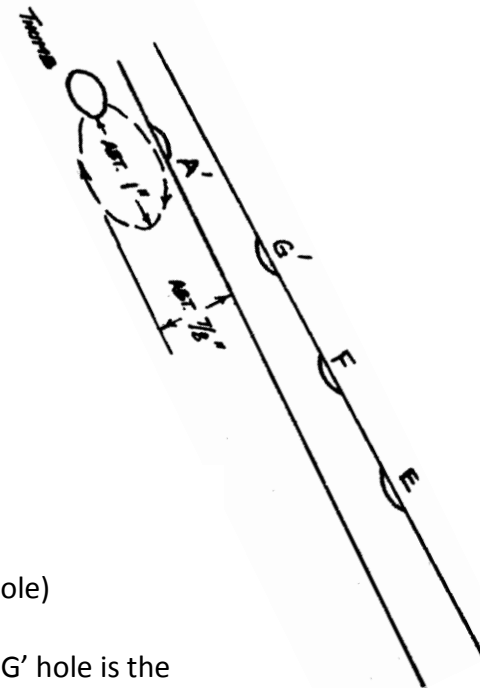
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	o	x	o
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	o	x	o	o	o	o
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	o	x	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	o	x	o	o	x	o	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x	x	o	x	o	o	x	o	o	o	o	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	o	x	o	o	x	o	o	o	o	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
o	x	o	o	x	o	x	x	x	x	x	x	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

The actual **strikes** or **shakes** are made by closing the required holes, care being taken that if more than one finger is required to be lowered, all are put down at the same time, so that only the required notes are sounded — ie. from B to B — if the B finger touches the chanter before the Low A finger, Low A will sound before Low G, which is the required note. Similarly, when raising the Low A finger from the Low G (all holes closed) position, if the Low A finger is lifted before the B finger, Low A will sound before B which is the required note - therefore raise all fingers simultaneously.

Note that the shake A' — A' is the only one of this group to take advantage of the “rule” that **“gracenotes (ie. stems “up”) may be played by raising or lowering one finger to play that note**, and you will not be counted as having “false fingered” by doing so (this is not the case for melody notes, whose stems go “down”).

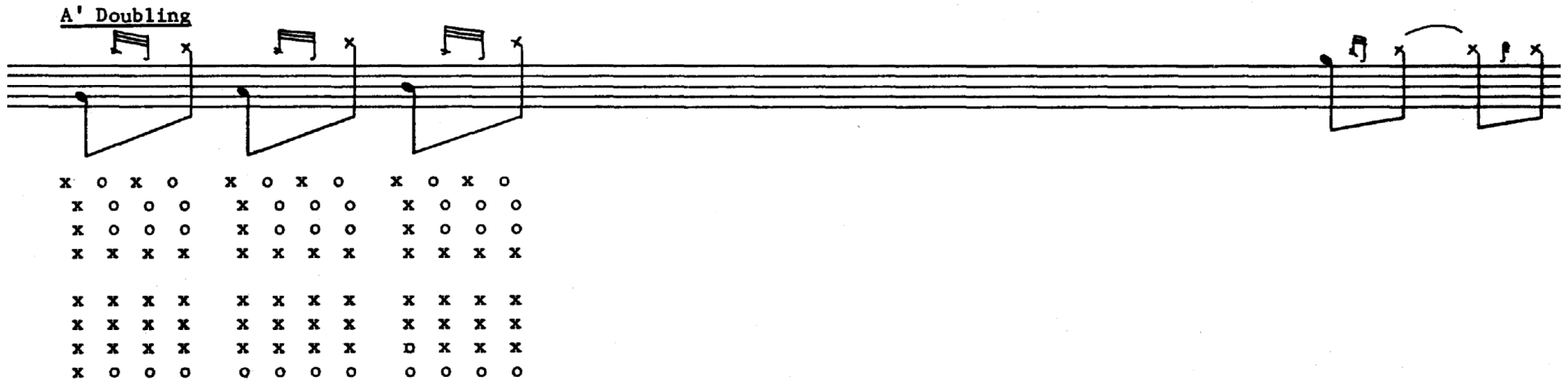
Most pipers play the G' shake from A' to A' as follows, and this is the way recommended:—

- Play A', with the A' thumb slightly “above” the A' hole (ie. thumb higher than the High A hole)
- Play G', by sweeping the thumb downwards across the A' hole (thus closing it, so that the G' hole is the “highest” hole open), so that as the thumb clears said hole while still travelling downwards, A' is again sounded. The thumb should continue in it's elliptical path until it reaches the starting point again, from which position it is ready to play the next note.



“**DOUBLINGS**” – These are, as the name implies, groups of two gracenotes, so that, at least as far as a beginner is concerned, are always shown as demi-semi-quavers, with the stems pointing upwards. “Doublings” are performed on all notes; we will start from the doubling of High A (A’) and finish on the doubling of Low G.

**A’ Doubling**



x o x o    x o x o    x o x o

x o o o    x o o o    x o o o

x o o o    x o o o    x o o o

x x x x    x x x x    x x x x

x x x x    x x x x    x x x x

x x x x    x x x x    x x x x

x o o o    o o o o    o o o o

Complete the exercise Naturally, the following would make no sense:–



A’ gracenote being the same as the first melody note, so that only the G’ gracenote can be performed to separate A’ and A’ melody notes as shown above.

This should be easily grasped, as the method is as follows (as can be deduced from the fingering positions shown):

- play the first melody note
- play A’ (with correct fingering!)
- play G’ as explained in the lesson above “G’ Shake from A’- A’ (see diagram on page 14), and finish on the second (or final ) melody note in the movement (ie. A’ ).

N.B. Gracenotes( stems up !) may (but not necessarily) be played by the raising or lowering of one finger. (if not otherwise defined, this would be “false fingering”).

Melody notes (stems down) must at all times be played “correctly” (as learned in the scale).

In the A’ doubling, the A’ gracenote is played correctly, while the G’ gracenote is “false fingered” by closing the G’ hole (without simultaneously raising the E finger). The doubling should sound as: “melody note (pause) - 1, 2” (pause on completion of “two”), 1 being A’ gracenote, 2 being G’ gracenote finishing on A’ melody note.

**Remember:** As all doublings (and most other movements for that matter) can be played from all notes in the scale, you must practice the doubling by proceeding “up the scale” from Low G to A’ then “down” again to Low G, listening carefully to see that each doubling sounds exactly the same as the one before.

In the “High A Doubling”, the hardest part is to ensure that no “crossing noise” is made from the first melody note to the A’ gracenote (ie that fingers are raised and lowered to the positions as shown, only).

**G' Doubling.** High G Doubling

Grid 1 (G' Doubling):

x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
x	o	x	o	x	o	x	o
x	o	o	o	x	o	o	o
x	o	o	o	x	o	o	o
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
x	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Grid 2 (High G Doubling):

x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
x	o	x	o	o	x	o	o
o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

In this doubling the G' and F gracenotes are played "correctly" (as can be deduced from the fingering positions shown). It should sound as follows:-

"Melody Note.... 1, 2, 3...." – "1" being G' gracenote, "2" being F gracenote, and "3" being the "final" High G (G') Melody Note.

Care should be taken to ensure that the "1, 2, 3" sound is being "evenly" played.

Care should be taken not to allow this doubling to sound as shown :-

where the G' gracenote or the F gracenote respectively, are given more emphasis than necessary (shown here as semi quavers – two tails).

The High G (G') doubling as normally written would make little sense if written to follow a G' melody note, so that either a shake as explained previously from G' to G' could be played to separate the two G's, or, as has been written above, the G' doubling from G' to G' can be defined differently - play G' melody note, then play F, then G' doubling as normal, care being taken not to emphasise the first F gracenote too much (should be equal in time value to the following G' and F).

It should perhaps be added, that in practice, practically no use is made of the G' doubling from G' to G' as defined above. However, it should still be mastered in this exercise.

It should also be noted that most players play the high G Doubling as "Melody Note.... 1, 2...." which follows the "one, two" sound of all the other doublings, and play it as "G' gracenote on F, High G" as shown in the example above. My version of it may well hark back to the playing of piobaireachd, when the so-called "big tunes" were the common expression of playing. However, at speed, no discernable difference should be heard.

**F Doubling.**

(a) (b)

In this doubling the two G' gracenotes are played "correctly". As you can see, what really is being played is: – Melody note, G gracenote on F, G' gracenote on F, just as if the doubling were written like this:

However, care must be taken not to sound the first F too long, as the doubling should sound as: – "Melody Note.... 1, 2....".

"1" being first G' gracenote on F, and "2" being second G' gracenote on F.

Note the two methods of playing this doubling from High G: It is obvious that the first G' gracenote played in all other G' doublings cannot be played, as G' is already being played - the two standard solutions to this problem are shown in (a) and (b) "above":

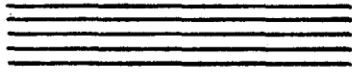
(a) the first gracenote is omitted altogether

(b) A' gracenote is substituted for the first G' gracenote.

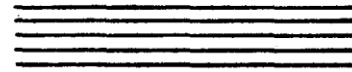
Both methods are encountered in tunes, so you should practice "both".

**E Doubling:**

This doubling is made using G' and F gracenotes on E. Referring to the F doubling, rewrite this doubling in a different way in the space provided:



**Now sit back and think what  
you must watch for.....**



Answer (a) The first E in the doubling must not be held too long; The doubling should sound as : – “Melody Note.... 1, 2....”.

- “1” being G' gracenote on E.
- “2” being F gracenote on E.

This principle holds for all remaining doublings.

You may have realized that this is the first time you have come across F gracenotes. Any gracenote can be made on any note, excepting the same note g. E on E, F on F etc. Others that you have not come across yet are:-

C, and B gracenotes (C is hardly used in practice, but can be made by lifting the C finger to open the C hole; B is used only rarely).

Note the two methods (“a” and “b” above) for playing the doubling from G'. Either omit the first High G gracenote, or substitute a “High A” for the High G. The same “solution” is used for F doubling from High G, and the same solutions will be used for all remaining doublings down to Low G doubling. Both must be learned and mastered.

No more need be said re the doubling from High A !

D Doubling.

x	x	x	x	x
x	o	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	o	x
x	o	o	o	o
x	o	o	o	o
x	o	o	o	o
x	x	x	x	x

x	x	x	x	x
o	x	x	x	x
o	x	x	x	x
o	x	o	x	x
x	o	o	o	o
x	o	o	o	o
x	o	o	o	o
o	x	x	x	x

As can be seen, this doubling is made using G and E gracenotes on D, and should sound as F and E doublings – ie “Melody Note.... 1, 2....”.

- “1” being G’ gracenote on D
- “2” being E gracenote on D

From G’ and A’, the usual standard solutions are used. You will notice however that I have shown an “alternate” fingering method (c) for the doubling from G’ to D (substituting A’ gracenote for G’ gracenote, as shown in examples “b” and “c” above).

The first method, (b) plays the A’ gracenote as a gracenote lifting only one finger, (the A’ thumb) so that A’ is sounded with E, F and G’ fingers on the chanter. The second method could be employed (it is equally correct !) and which plays the A’ gracenote as a proper note (correct fingering as in the scale).

Either method (ie “b” or “c” can be used; in fact it would be nearly impossible to tell which is being played once the correct “speed” (of execution) is attained; the only difference being that in method (c) the E finger is touched to the chanter just a fraction before the F and G fingers. Probably, for the sake of continuity (following on from F and E doublings) method B should be practiced first. Although the “c” alternative can be played in the remaining doublings, down to low G (in lieu of “b” above) the “c” alternative is not shown hereafter.

**“C” Doubling to “Low G” Doubling – “Up the Scale”** Pupils to “Fill Out” the blank spaces, as an “Exercise” – on Blank Manuscript Paper....  
 (fill in up the scale)

	<table border="0" style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td> </tr> <tr> <td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td> </tr> <tr> <td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td> </tr> <tr> <td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td><td>x</td> </tr> </table>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	<p>E.G. ... C DOUBLING FROM LOW G</p>	
x	x	x	x	x																			
x	x	x	x	x																			
x	x	x	x	x																			
x	x	x	x	x																			

As can be seen, these doublings use G' and D gracenotes which are played on C, B, Low A,



*Having perfected your technique “evenly” up and down the scale, you should then play the same exercises “dotted and cut”, and “cut and dotted” to ensure that you will then have encountered all of the combinations you will find when you play tunes.*

“Melody Note.... 1, 2....” (Melody Note being starting note)

- “1” being **High G** gracenote on relevant note
- “2” being **D** gracenote on same note as “above” (ie “C”, “B”, “Low A”, or Low G”).

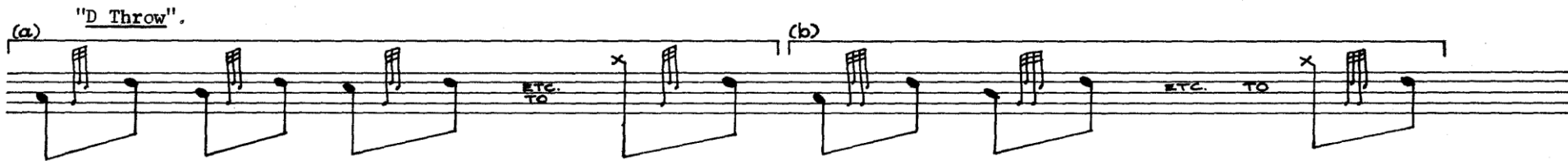
The same standard solutions are used in playing C (and the other) doublings from High G and High A.

Only the fingering positions for those C doublings shown above are shown below. You should by now be able to write out the remaining C doubling finger positions (and B, Low A and Low G doubling finger positions), remembering that the G' gracenote in the doubling is performed at the same time that you are preparing to play the central gracenote (ie C, B, and Low A and Low G respectively). Once the G' finger is lowered, the central note will sound until the D gracenote is played, by raising the D finger. The final melody note will then sound when the D finger is lowered.

**If you do not understand this you must go back to Page 6 and start again – to “revise” and “refresh”.**





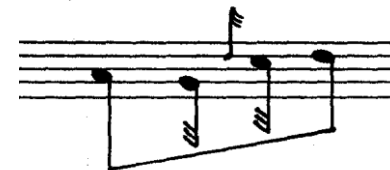


As you can see from the examples above, what is known as a “D Throw” can be played in either of the manners set out in (a) or (b). It is important to realize that you must adopt one way or another, and not mix the two, particularly in the same tune. Some pipers may play example (a) in jigs and hornpipes, but will prefer the second method in marches and strathspeys, where the more solid sound of the double Low G is very attractive. Naturally, if you play method (b) exclusively, you will play it whenever you see (a) written, as it has now become the practice to always write down method (a), irrespective of which method is used.

Method (a) is performed While using the same fingering positions, there are three ways commonly accepted too “time” the D throw. These are: from low A as shown below: (i) - Low G, D, C being played “evenly” as written: “Melody Note.... 1,2,3,4....”

x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x
x	x	o	x	o
x	x	o	o	o
x	x	o	o	o
o	x	x	x	x

- “1” being Low G,
  - “2” being D
  - “3” being C
  - “4” being D Melody Note (stem down).
- (ii) - “Melody Note.... Low G, D gracenote on C, D melody note....”  
 Obviously in this method, low G and C will be slightly longer in time than the D, played as a gracenote. This method could be written thus:.....↗



(iii) “Melody Note, Low G, D , C shake, D Melody Note....”  
 This method could be written thus:.....→



In practice, many pipers tend to play either methods (i) or (ii). As written, method (i) would be more “correct”, but method (ii) is more appealing.

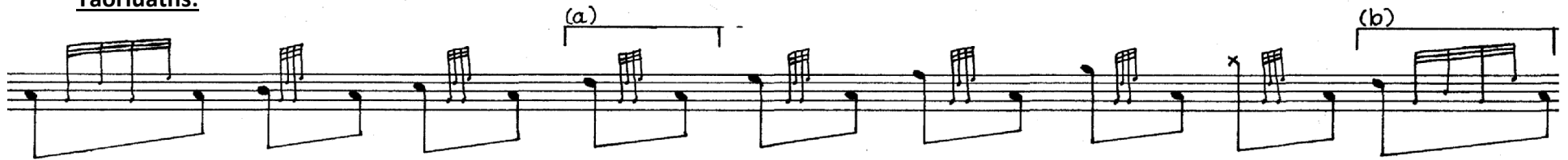
**Method (b)** is played as “Melody Note.... Low G, D, low G, C, and D Melody Note, care being taken to sound all gracenotes “evenly”. You may have noticed that the first three gracenotes of the group form what you have already learned as a “Grip” or “Lemluath”, However, if you practice it in this way, you must take care not to over emphasise the C gracenote

**Please note** that the C in this movement is played “closed” – with little finger on the chanter, so that you only have to lift the D finger to sound the final D.....↗



Of all of the forms of playing the “D throw”, I personally like the more “solid” grip throw the best. To practice all of the options is a good exercise, and allows you to choose what is best for you.

**Taorluaths:**



x x x x x x  
 x x x x x x  
 x x x x x x  
 x x x x o x

x x o x x x  
 x x x x x x  
 x x x x x x  
 o x x x o o

x x x x x x  
 x x x x x x  
 x x x x x x  
 x x x x o x

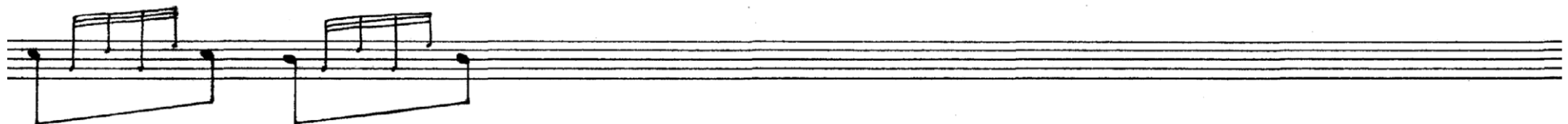
o x x x x x  
 o x x x x x  
 o x o x x x  
 x x x x o o

As you can see, the taorluath is really a “grip” followed by an E gracenote, and should be played as – “Melody Note.... 1, 2, 3....”

- “1” being first Low G
- “2” being D gracenote on 2<sup>nd</sup> Low C.
- “3” being E gracenote on the “final” Melody Note [within the group of tied quavers](#) (in above examples, Low A).

The D and E gracenotes of course, should be played as described in earlier lessons (eg page 11) - . by lifting the D and E fingers about ½” from the chanter. in any case, both must be of the same length.

As with the grip, tradition “demands” that in pibroch the taorluath from D be played with a B gracenote in lieu of the D gracenote played with all other “starting notes”, as shown in example (b), For the “light music” ([dancing and marching tunes](#)) however, example (a) may he played (although taorluath from D is not very often encountered. Taorluaths could also be played to finish on D, C and B, but in practice, are only encountered when playing from C to C and B to B, so this is what you must practice.



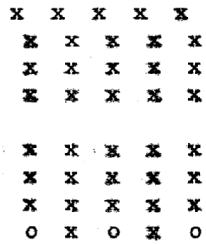
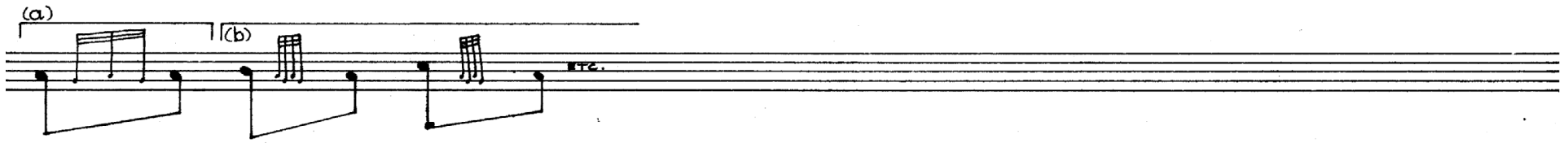
x x x x x x  
 x x x x x x  
 x x x x x x  
 x x x x o x

x x x x x x  
 x x x x x x  
 x x x x x x  
 x x x x o x

x x o x x x  
 o x x x o o  
 o x x x o o  
 x x x x x x

x x o x x x  
 x x x x x x  
 o x x x o o  
 o x x x o o

The "Birl", or "Little Finger Movement":



As you can see in the example (a) above, this movement is performed by "dextrous" movement of the A (little) finger to close and open the **Low A** hole. It should sound as follows: "Melody Note.... 1, 2...."

- "1" being the first low G "shake" (or "strike") on Low A.
- "2" being the second 2nd Low G shake onto the final Melody Note – Low A.

Care should be taken to ensure that both Low G shakes are of the same length; the Low A gracenote of course must be the same length as the two low G's. **Practice only example (a) above until you are proficient at this movement.**

There are several ways of performing the Birl – and it will take some practice to determine which method is best suited to your little finger.

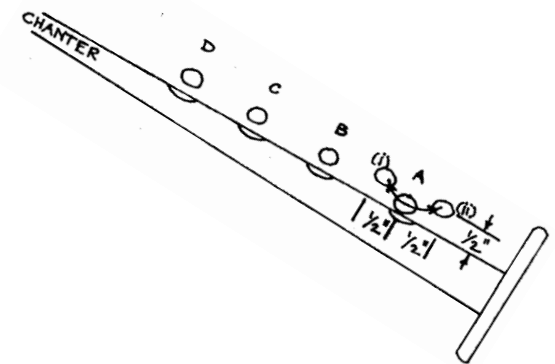
(1) The way most pupils begin: - lower the A finger straight down to close the **Low A** hole (and sound Low G), lift to play Low A (about ½ " clear of the chanter), lower A finger to play Low G, (as before, keeping finger straight) and raise about ½ " to play the final note ie Low A.

As you become more proficient at this, you may progress to (2) or (3) below, depending on which method you prefer. If you have a little finger disproportionately long in comparison with your other fingers, method (3) will probably be the most convenient, for reasons which will become clear when you read (2) below.

(2) Play Low A, then lower little finger straight down to play Low G, lift about ½ " to play Low A, then play Low G by drawing the little finger across the A hole (**to your right, looking down**). This requires that the little finger bends downwards at the second joint). As the little finger clears the A hole from left to right (as you look down) the final Low A will be heard. If your little finger is too long, as mentioned in (1), you may have difficulty in clearing it as you draw it across the A hole (**from left to right, looking down**).

(3) Play Low A, and prepare to play the Birl inclining the little finger to the position (i) in the diagram: Then close **the A** hole to sound the first Low G by moving the little finger in the direction of the arrow. As the little finger clears the A hole and comes to rest in position (ii), Low A is sounded.

The procedure is reversed to sound the second Low G and final Low A, the little finger coming to rest in position (i). The little finger should then move to its normal position directly above the **Low A** hole, in preparation for the next movement which may follow.



## The Birl, Continued....

Having determined which method of performing the Birl you are going to adopt, you may proceed to practice example (b) on the previous page 24, which is the execution of a “Birl” from a note other than Low A, so that the Low A shown in example (b) is played as a demi-semi-quaver. This should sound as follows: “Melody Note.... 1, 2, 3....”

- “1” being first Low A gracenote.
- “2” being first Low G shake on Low A.
- “3” being second low G shake on the final melody note, Low A.

Although not written into the exercise (b) above on Page 24, the Birl could also be played from low G (but this is very seldom encountered if ever). Quite often you will see the following example (c) written, which omits the first Low A gracenote of the Birl in example (b) shown on page 24. For solo playing, it is rather a matter of “taste” which method is played – some pipers will always play example (b) even though example (c) is written, or vice versa, However, if you are playing in a Band, or with other pipers, you must all play “the same” for best “effect” (togetherness).

(c)

x x x x x  
x x x x x  
x x x x x  
x x x x x

x x x x x  
x x x x x  
o x x x x  
o x o x o

**Not shown here** is another type of Birl which is combined with a High G gracenote before the Low A gracenotes shown in Example “b” on the previous page 24. These are often used at the end of a tunes “measure” when they finish on Low A, or in what we might call “heavy tunes” which call on a piper’s dexterity and prowess as a solo player, who may use many a variation on what you have learned thus far, to enhance his/her playing.

Now that you have progressed this far (if you can’t understand any of the forgoing, do go back to start again !), you may be interested to learn the several tunes I have found to be excellent for learners, in **Section Three**.

### Section 3

#### KENMUIRE'S UP AND AWAY WILLY

Handwritten musical notation for the tune 'Kenmuire's Up and Away Willy'. The score is written on four staves in treble clef with a 6/8 time signature. The melody is characterized by descending lines from the heads of the notes, a style noted as being from circa 1955 in Australia. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'f' and 'x'.

#### A MANS A MAN FOR A' THAT

Handwritten musical notation for the tune 'A Mans A Man for a' That'. The score is written on four staves in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. The melody is characterized by four-bar phrases, a style noted as being from circa 1955 in Australia. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'f' and 'x'. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' and a slur.

### Update to 2012:

*These tunes were among the first I learned; they certainly test a pupil's knowledge and abilities.*

*Note that I have hand written these "tunes" or "melodies" in the style of the time (circa 1955) here in Australia, with lines descending from the heads of the melody notes from their right hand side.*

*Standards have now been "set" as explained on pages 2, 3 and 9, and unfortunately for some, this way of writing music for the Great Highland Bagpipe has moved "on".*

*Notice also that I have written the music with four bars across the page. Since most pipe music is constructed in two or four bar "phrases", such setting out easily reveals repetitive bars and phrases. This, for some, is an aid to memory.*

*The two tunes shown here are traditional favourites, much used in military bands because of their simplicity and popularity with crowds; especially the second, since it goes with Robbie Burns' poem of the same name.*

# THE ATHOL HIGHLANDERS' MARCH

The "Strong" beat always follows the bar line, and when marched to, the left heel should "strike" at that moment – the first note (or gracenote in any "movement" or "embellishment") following each bar line, the right heel should "strike" at the commencement of the second beat in the bar.

## Further Update to 2012:

This is the second "6/8" March tune that I have included, for your diligent practise. It also has been a very popular "marching tune" for the military.

Every piper should be able to play these tunes with or without the gracenotes or "embellishments" which adorn the tunes and can enhance them.

Beginners should play these tunes slowly at first, and then more quickly. A metronome is a good investment, mechanical or electrical.

This tune has a "First Time" and "Second Time" in the third part. The "First Time" 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> bars are replaced in the repeat of the part as indicated.

This is a device to make tunes more interesting.

"Three Parted" tunes are unusual in piping; someone always wants to "round off" the tune to four parts.

Six and eight parted tunes are usually of the heavier "competition" type; but one can always simplify them.

There are two beats per bar in 2/4 and 6/8 tunes (strong, weak).