

8 -- THE COMPLETED -- ?

CONCISE TUTOR

Highland

FOR

Bagpipe

This is the “pdf” for “Part 2, Concise Tutor for Practice Chanter, 1973” – updated 2012 – and made freely available via the internet “online” to the piping fraternity worldwide in perpetuity through “keepandshare.com” by “a piper too”.

PRACTISE CHANTER

The Canntaireachd and Pibaireachd of Domhnall Dubh

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

INTRODUCTION 1973: Reasons for writing/Dedication **Section 1 page 1**

**** **For Continuation-Update see “Concise Tutor for Practice Chanter”**
Parts 2 and 3 “online” pdf document at “KeepandShare” (keepandshare.com).

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SECTION 4.

TO SET A PIPE CHANTER REED CORRECTLY:

Although the following is a topic deserving a book on its own, it is hoped that this summary will be of assistance.

REMEMBER:

1. The reed must fit firmly into its socket,
2. Add hemp as necessary if the reed is raised (to lower the pitch), remove hemp if the reed is lowered (to raise the pitch).
3. Top notes are more sensitive than lower notes. Therefore if chanter sounds “sharp”, High A (A’) will be sharper than Low A.

And, if chanter sounds “flat”, High A (A’) will be flatter than Low A (A). When tested blown directly by mouth, you should play and listen to the following: A, C, E, A’, E, C, A to “see” (hear) whether those notes seem to “gel” (make sense, sound good). If you have an Electronic Tuner to help you in this first approximation, watch the “needle” which should register the same value for Low A and for High A, care being taken to supply the same air pressure for both top and bottom hands.

WHEN TUNING YOUR OWN DRONES:

When Tuning Your Own Drones, it is easier to tune to A’. Then check to A. If Reed Is “Set Correctly” Tune to A’ and check to Low A, the drone will still be in tune. No “beats of dissonance” will be heard, so that no change (lengthening or shortening of the drone) is necessary;

If Chanter Is Sharp Tune to A’ and check to A, which will be “not so sharp” (i.e. flatter), The drone will require to be tuned “upwards” (i.e. lengthened) to remain in tune. This has the effect of lowering the pitch of the drone (i.e. “flattening” it), to match the flatter pitch of Low A.

Remedy - Raise the reed and try again.

If Chanter is Flat, tune to A’ and check to A, which will be “not so flat” (i.e. sharper). The drone will be required to be tuned “downwards” (i.e. Shortened) to remain in tune, This has the effect of increasing the pitch (ie, “sharpening” it) to match the sharper pitch of low A. Low A is the “Tonic” note and less sensitive to irregular blowing than High A.

Remedy - Lower the reed and try again ! **Concise Tutor for Practise Chanter** by Donald Chalmers 1973, updated in blue in 2012, **Section 4, Page 28**

IF SOMEONE ELSE IS TUNING YOUR DRONES, it may be easier to tune to Low A is the “Tonic” note and less sensitive to irregular blowing than High A.

If Chanter Is Sharp: Tune to Low A and check to High A (A’) which will be sharper (higher in pitch). The drone will require to be tuned “downwards” (i.e. shortened) to remain in tune.

Remedy - Raise the reed (to flatten it’s sound) and try again

If the Chanter Is Flat: Tune to Low A and check to A’ which will be flatter. The drone will require to be tuned “upwards” (i.e. lengthened) to remain in tune with the High A.

Remedy - Lower the reed and try again!

HINTS:

Care must also be take to only grip the chanter close to its humped (head) area since the Chanter is at its weakest between the High A and High G holes, and if cracked or broken here, it makes for an expensive repair job, if that is possible.

If a Practice Goose has been utilized by the pupil in his/her learning at an early stage (see pages L and 5), many “teething problems” in the “winding” (blowing) of the instrument will be avoided. The same can be said of the use of a modern moisture absorbent pipe bag and modern drone reeds. As with anything, “maintenance is the key” to many hours of happy satisfaction – and for the ears of otherwise unfortunate neighbours.

A chanter reed should not be allowed either to dry out completely, or to get saturated with moisture. Regular inspection of the reed is recommended, although care must always be taken not to damage the reeds tips.

A good reed should “crow” when blown in the mouth, If not, then some squeezing, moistening or drying, cutting etc. may be necessary. It is best in the initial stages to leave this to your P/M or Tutor. However, as always, “look”, “listen” and “learn” to do these things yourself. You will know when the time has come, and you are ready to burst out onto the world stage.

Both tenor drones should be tuned as closely as possible to the same point (to just on, above or below the bottom of the humped area).

TO SET A DRONE REED CORRECTLY:

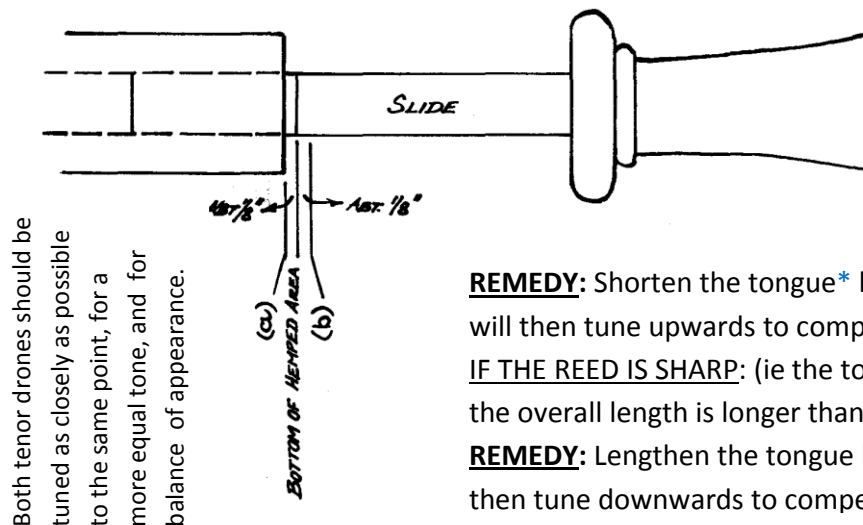
As with “How to Set A Chanter Reed Correctly,” this is a topic “deserving a book on its own”. However it is hoped that the following summary will be of some help.

REMEMBER:

1. The art of “steady blowing” cannot be taught, it must be mastered through your conscious desire to learn and to listen. A “practice goose” (bagged chanter) may be helpful. You would be well advised to watch and listen to experienced players (preferably playing at “Open Competition” standard). The drones of an unsteady player can be seen to move up and down; the drones of a good blower will be “steady”, as will be the “tunefulness” of his/her pipe. Of course, a good player will not tolerate an inferior pipe, and will always ensure that

- (a) bag is well “seasoned” (if of the old leather variety), and air tight
- (b) stocks cannot turn and are “angle-set” correctly (especially blowpipe)
- (c) all joints of the drones are firmly fitting with easily movable slides
- (d) the blowpipe valve (if leather) works, and will close properly.

2. Tenor drones should be tuned between the positions shown marked (a) and (b) in the following diagram (adjustments to reeds to attain this):

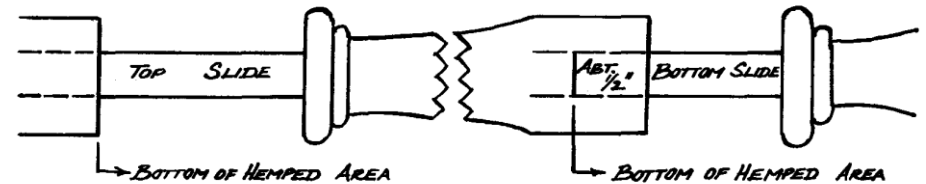


REMEDY: Shorten the tongue* by moving the bridle to increase the pitch of sound emitted from the reed. The drone will then tune upwards to compensate (ie lower the pitch of the drone itself). Repeat until satisfied.

IF THE REED IS SHARP: (ie the tongue is too short and possibly too light), then the drone will tune too far up, so that the overall length is longer than recommended.

REMEDY: Lengthen the tongue by moving the bridle to lower the pitch of sound emitted from the reed, the drone will then tune downwards to compensate. Repeat until satisfied. THE END ? No, it's just the beginning! Best of luck !

3. Bass drone should be tuned as shown in the following diagram:



With some makes of pipe you will have to be satisfied if the lower joint of the base drone tunes fairly well down the slide, but there should be at least 1” of the slide showing. If possible, the bottom joint should be tuned to a little below the hemped area of the slide.

4. You will notice that the vibrating length of the tongue of the drone reed is determined by the position of the “bridle”, which should be (for traditional cane reeds) of waxed hemp, firmly but not too tightly secured. The reed should be firmly inserted into the drone, care being taken not to spring the tongue from its seat. This will cause squealing and double tone.

5. The (traditional cane) drone reeds should not be allowed to dry out completely or to become saturated with moisture which of course adds weight to the tongue, thereby slowing the vibrations (ie “flattening” or “lowering” the pitch, or the sound produced from the reed itself).

IF THE REED IS FLAT: (i.e. the tongue is too long and possibly too heavy, and too low in pitch of itself), then the drone will tune too far down, so that the overall length is shorter than recommended:

*Rather than to shorten the tongue, and if the overall length of the reed is unusually long, you might achieve the same effect by cutting a little off the open end of the reed, rebinding it, so that it goes further

HINTS ON PIPE CHANTER REED TREATMENT

These notes come from (I think) a VHPBA workshop held at Scotch College in the mid 1970's. I have presented them in the same cryptic format. These are the things you should watch your P/M or Tutor doing as he/she "manipulates" and adjusts your chanter reeds to suit "you", and your strength of blowing. Also shown are some descriptions to aid your understanding.

What to do

REED TOO STRONG:

1. Tie a "bridle" and so close/narrow mouth of reed.
2. Ease tips by rubbing on fine glass paper (very fine sandpaper, or emery paper). Rub last ¼" of blades. See that blades are kept even.
3. More drastic: Reduce thickness of blade near tying. Ease tips as in (2).
4. Not recommended for non-expert. Narrow blades by shaving slice off each side. This will reduce the open mouth. Rub as in (2) above.
5. Squeeze blades together manually. **Apply firm pressure; not rough.**

REED TOO WEAK:

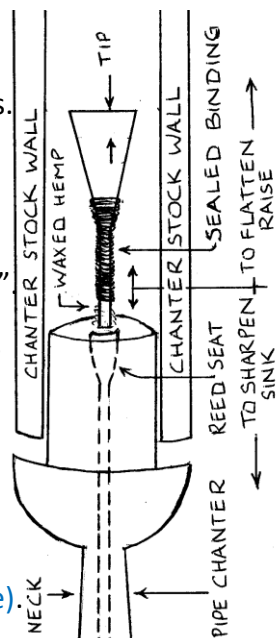
1. Push mandril through from staple end (reed must be damp when doing so). Results are not long. **Take care not to insert the mandril too far in.**
2. Open blades by manual pressure on blades – or use pliers (**gently**).
Open Mouth by pressing sideways on blades, or sideways on staple gently.

TO SHARPEN:

1. Cut one thirty-second of an inch off length of blades.
2. Sink in chanter (**remove hemp if necessary**).
3. Reduce width of blades (**be very careful !**).
4. Squeeze blades together manually when "breaking in"

TO FLATTEN: Raise reed in reed seat, by adding hemp.

1. Reduce thickness of blades (**very little at a time**).
2. Rub tips of blades **gently on fine emery paper**.
3. Open reed "mouth" by:
 - (a) Mandril.
 - (b) Pliers (**with gentle sideways pressure below cane**).



EFFECT: Flattens. This may be rectified by "sinking" reed in chanter. Reed becomes "more free". May go "false" on F. Tape F hole ?

Again "flattens" reed. Same effects as in (2).

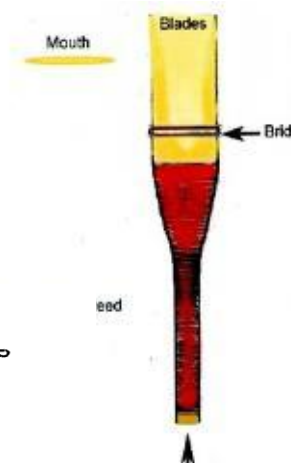
Sharpens reed.

Sharpens and "eases" reed.

Flattens reed. "Sink" in chanter to rectify.



Flattens reed.



The reed shown is for the Uilleann Pipes, but the principles are the same.

Reed Sharpens.

May cause squeal. Loses resistance. May be necessary to rub tips. Stiffens reed. I trust that you will find this information helpful, and pass such knowledge on, as

As above. Strength unaffected. you progress to teaching others yourselves. When we take on this sacred trust we revere the hundreds of years it has taken our fore-

As above. Rub tips. fathers and mothers from their cottage industries to

"seek out what is true", and express it in "Piobaireachd" – that classical music of

Eases reed. Helps when "breaking in" a new reed if done each time immediately before playing. the Great Highland Bagpipe Bagpipe – from simple

themes to variations of increasing complexity – with unwavering drone tone and

Flattens drastically. May have to shorten blades to compensate. Weakens

reed. pentatonic scales – from their own native intuition – without the help of all the

Less drastic. Compensate by sinking in chanter. "mod cons" we have today

through science and technology. We have been blessed in our music in deed !

Strengthens reed. Compensate as above.

Key number	Helmholtz name	Scientific name	Frequency (Hz)	Corresponding Open Strings					Corresponding Bagpipe Scale						
				Violin	Viola	Cello	Bass	Guitar	Bass	Tenor	Chanter	Cycles/Sec			
62	a [#] /b ^b	A ^{#5} /B ^{b5}	932.328						(2)	± 0	Ch high A'	932.328			
61	a	A5	880.00												
60	g [#] /a ^b	G ^{#5} /A ^{b5}	830.609								- 2(1)	Ch high G'	828.609		
59	g	G5	783.991								- 4	Chanter F	779.991		
58	f [#] /g ^b	F ^{#5} /G ^{b5}	739.989						(1.5)	± 0	Chanter E	698.456			
57	f	F5	698.456								± 0	Chanter D	622.254		
56	e	E5	659.255												
55	d [#] /e ^b	D ^{#5} /E ^{b5}	622.254								± 0	Chanter D	622.254		
54	d	D5	587.330								- 3	Chanter C	584.330		
53	c [#] /d ^b	C ^{#5} /D ^{b5}	554.365								± 0	Chanter B	523.251		
52	c	C5 Tenor C	523.251								± 0	Chanter B	523.251		
51	b	B4	493.883												
50	a [#] /b ^b	A ^{#4} /B ^{b4}	466.164						(1)	± 0	Ch Low A	466.164			
49	a	A4 A440	440.000		A	A									
48	g [#] /a ^b	G ^{#4} /A ^{b4}	415.305								- 1	Ch Low G	414.305		
47	g	G4	391.995												
46	f [#] /g ^b	F ^{#4} /G ^{b4}	369.994												
45	f	F4	349.228												
44	e	E4	329.628									High E			
43	d [#] /e ^b	D ^{#4} /E ^{b4}	311.127												
42	d	D4	293.665		D	D									
41	c [#] /d ^b	C ^{#4} /D ^{b4}	277.183												
40	c	C4 Middle C	261.626												
39	b	B3	246.942												
38	a [#] /b ^b	A ^{#3} /B ^{b3}	233.082						(0.5)		± 0	Tenor Drones	233.082		
37	a	A3	220.000			A									
36	g [#] /a ^b	G ^{#3} /A ^{b3}	207.652												
35	g	G3	195.998		G	G									
34	f [#] /g ^b	F ^{#3} /G ^{b3}	184.997												
33	f	F3	174.614								F (7-string) (0.375)	E (BD) Strong Harmonic	174.614		
32	e	E3	164.814												
31	d [#] /e ^b	D ^{#3} /E ^{b3}	155.563												
30	d	D3	146.832			D									
29	c [#] /d ^b	C ^{#3} /D ^{b3}	138.591												
28	c small octave	C3 Low C	130.813		C	C (6 string)									
27	B	B2	123.471												
26	A [#] /B ^b	A ^{#2} /B ^{b2}	116.541						(0.25)		± 0	Bass Drone	116.541		
25	A	A2	110.000			A									

Scale of the Great Highland Bagpipe, as compared to the Equal Tempered Keyboard. Bagpipe details shown in red. As derived from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piano_Key_frequencies for "Concise Tutor for Practice Chanter" (1973) by Donald Chalmers 2012. Section 5 p.31

Although not essential knowledge for players of the Great Highland Bagpipe, interactions between instrumentalists are becoming more common, and thus it is helpful for pipers to become acquainted with the Piano Keyboard, and where the bagpipe sits in comparison. Modern computer programs allow pipers to write their own music, and some of these indicate (in addition to the bagpipes standard "Treble Clef" – for the benefit of other musicians) that they will need to play their accompaniment in the Key of "D Major" (with C and F sharps substituted, whenever they play C and F) or "A Major" (where C, F and G' sharps are substituted, whenever they play C, F and G'). **Concise Tutor for Practice Chanter 1973** – updated by Donald Chalmers 2012. **Sec 5, P 31**



VICTORIAN HIGHLAND PIPE BAND ASSOCIATION

Adjudicator's Certificate

Awarded to

DONALD BOYD CHALMERS

who qualified by examination in

Chalmers

Examiner

23/3/1977

Date

Stewart

President

Chalmers

Vice Principal

Like Presidents, Principal's, Pipe and Drum Major's, Examiner's, Adjudicators, Tutors, Soloists and Band Players, all participants must co-operate with each other to attain "unison of focus" and "best result".

All have their own time in the sun, and all face their demise, so it is prudent that we should leave those who follow in our footsteps, signposts (pointers) along the long road to their aim, to become competent.... zero discord musicians.

What was known intuitively by great players of the past, was nearly lost to the world, by the advent of Pipe Bands, a new way of playing, and "mass production" without the guidance of accessible and humble practitioners.

Now that the internet age has arrived, vast amounts of information can be captured and stored, and printed worldwide. And it is up to "us" to absorb, to make sense of, and to make any changes within our ability, which might advance the level of playing of our harmonious instrument – that Great Highland Bagpipe.

New music can be written and played, but if the "soul-music" of the bagpipe is ignored, the playing becomes lacklustre, mechanical and rigid, like the music of the pianola with its paper piano rolls. Slow Airs (songs) and Piobaireachd are the soul-music I am talking about. They are the crux of the instrument, the base upon which all else depends. Concise Tutor for Practice Chanter 1973 – updated by Donald Chalmers 2012. Sec 5, Page 32

Section 5 – Musical Theory Continued....

The “Treble Clef’s Range” insofar as Pipers are concerned, begins and finishes over the whole of the chanter’s range. As described on page 31, the pitch of the Chanter’s Low A is generally about 466.164 cycles per second, which corresponds to B Flat (B ♭) for the piano, when A4 (White Key No 49) is set at “Concert Pitch” – ie 440 cycles per second.

However, this pitch can vary over time, and is affected by atmospheric temperature, pressure, and moisture. In particular, a move from sea level to higher altitudes and cooler places can significantly lower the pitch of the chanter. The pitch then can be raised a few cycles per second by “warming up the pipes” – ie warming up the air within the bag from one’s breath, and/or by playing inside near a heater.

If the chanter reed has been “set” to B Flat (B ♭) at sea level, and chords with the drones on all notes (and where one octave is achieved between the Chanter’s Low and High A’s and G’s) no fiddling with the Chanter Reed should be necessary when moved to a higher altitude, even though a lower pitch emits.

Do not be panicked by your Electronic Tuner’s lower reading.

If you are playing “solo” (by yourself) there is no need for adjustment. Just tune your drones to the lower pitch the chanter sounds, and all should be well.... If you are playing with other instruments, then they too will have to “warm up” to attain “Concert Pitch” (A4 = 440 cycles/sec), or shorten their slide adjustment (if they have one) to suit the environment.

For Pianists, the “Treble Clef” generally indicates that the right hand will play those notes from “Middle C” (C4, White Key 40, which is generally situated at the centre of the keyboard) “upward” and to the right. However, experienced players will often use the right hand to play “down” to “E3” (White Key 32).

Similarly, experienced players will be able to use their left hands to play the “lower notes” down to the left, which are usually defined by use of the “Bass Clef” right up to “B4” (White Key No 51). So, as you can see, there is a fair degree of overlap of hands possible for pianists.



Treble Clef High Notes

Since the Equal Tempered Piano Keyboard has been designed to enable frequent and easy “Change of Key” since the 1600’s, the modern piano keyboard’s Octave is divided into 12 equal parts (there are 12 semitones (notes, black and white) between “Octaves” (see Page 31). It is said that each semitone has a value of 100 cents, so that there are 1200 cents between notes of the same name (eg White Key No 39 – B3 to White Key No 51 – B4).

The simplest and most harmonious intervals possible are “Octaves” apart, where the ratios of frequencies are “unison” (1/1 Same Note), or 2/1 where the higher frequency note is exactly twice the frequency of the lower note etc. That is why they are given the same name.

Middle C is “C4”, because of the note’s position as the fourth C key (No 40) on a standard 88 key piano keyboard. The C one octave above is “C5”. When we compare their frequencies (in cycles per second), C5 has twice the frequency of C4. In other words, the ratio of the frequencies, the higher pitch over the lower is 2/1 or 2:1 ($\frac{523.251}{261.626} = \frac{2}{1}$).

For Piper’s, another important concept is that of “Perfect Fifth’s”, where, for instance the Chanter’s E compared to the Chanter’s Low A has a ratio of 3/2. E is the 5th note up from the chanter’s Low A, counting the first and the last notes (ie E is 2 spaces “up” from Low A). **E** and **A** can be used anywhere for harmony.



Bass Clef Low Notes

“Thirds” (notes 1 space or line up or down from the main melody notes) also feature prominently in the playing of “seconds” – that is “harmony” in pipe tunes. Harmony is quite often played in 3/4 Marches, and other recent tunes.

Care should be taken not to overdo this in pipe bands. In a band of 8 piper’s, not more than 2 should be allowed to play “seconds”, and one only to play “thirds”; otherwise, the original melody of the tune (the “firsts) will be hard to “hear” as the other notes “interlace” with it.

Simple gracenotes should be played in seconds and thirds, so that the “movements” in the original are not overwhelmed (that is, may still be clearly heard).

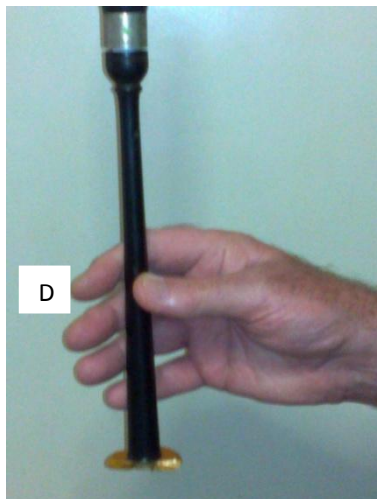
Gracenotes Exercise - can you do it? March 140beats/min Donald Chalmers 1980

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Gracenotes Exercise - can you do it?". The score is written in 2/2 time and consists of four staves. Each staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/2 time signature. The music is composed of a series of notes, many of which are grace notes (short notes with stems that ascend from the main note). The score is divided into four parts, each ending with a triplet of notes. The first part is marked with a "3" above the notes, indicating a triplet. The second part is also marked with a "3". The third part is marked with a "3". The fourth part is marked with a "3". The notes are primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, with some quarter notes. The grace notes are indicated by a small "g" above the note head and a stem that ascends from the main note.

Note the change of “dotting” and “cutting” in the 3rd and 4th parts, where the “grace-noting effect” is reversed.

I played this tune at a rate of knots at a Pipers' Club of Victoria Meeting not long after I had envisioned it. No one commented on it, so I asked Ross Campbell if he had liked it, to which he replied “not much”. So to this I asked another question “but can you play it ?” – to which he responded with a shrug. The “tune” of course should really be named “Gracenotes” Exercise, because the “semi-quavers”, although written and played (“fingered correctly”) as notes which form an important part of the “melody” (herein called “Melody Notes” because their stems “descend” from large note-heads), and are not shown as “gracenotes” (very short notes whose stems “ascend” – go “up” from – small note-heads – as indicated in the “Birl” movement at the end of each part). You will remember that I’ve taught you that the various “gracenotes” and “movements” (such as the Birl here shown) “take time from” the melody note which follows. I’ve already mentioned the Paper Roll of the Pianola (which allows air to pass through the holes cut into it variously spaced for note names, with each having a length equivalent to the note values). Clearly, the second beat of the last bar of each part (the “fifth”, which is unusual of itself, since pipe tunes are usually envisaged with four or eight bars to be repeated), falls on the first gracenoted Low A of the Birl, not the melody note itself. Clearly also, you will have to work up your “speed” (Beats/Min) from a careful and “Very Slow” pace. What are shown here as “semi-quavers” must be correctly played, even as you try to make them sound like “gracenotes”.sound like “gracenotes”.

(a) How to hold or “grip” the Practice Chanter.



When you first pick up your practice chanter, you should have first relaxed your hands by “shaking them all about”. Relax. The chanter should always be “gripped lightly”; the chanter should not be squeezed from your fingers (no pressure pale spots).

The thumb of the right hand should rest between and underneath the C and the D fingers. When the chanter is held vertically, and your grip is just slightly more relaxed, then your chanter should slip downwards between your fingers.

The positioning of your thumb in this way gives you the most control of your “bottom hand” (for right handed people, this will be your right hand).

Should your right hand be positioned too far “up” (say, under the D hole), your ‘bottom hand fingering’ will lack control. Too far “down” to under the B hole, your fingering will be “tight” and restricted.

(c) Another View of Hand Positions while playing Low G (all fingers on).



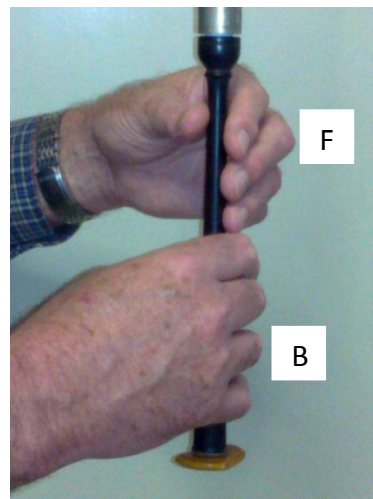
When you first start, it is important that your fingers cover all of the holes. When you play “Low G”, the only hole open is the Bore Hole which exits at the bottom of the chanter, under the “sole” or “base”.

These pictures show my purposely bevelled edge (to stop the chanter rolling when placed flat on a table), and a broken edge, which achieves the same effect.

This is what happens if you stupidly drop your chanter onto concrete, as I did more than 30 years ago. Luckily no other damage was done.

This picture shows my left hand little finger “at rest”; this is not used to cover any hole. It should be allowed “free travel”. It must not be “locked” below the E finger.

(b) Hold Chanter vertically, with both hands, gently.



Just how much of your G’, F and E fingers will “protrude” will depend on the shape of your own fingers. The little finger of the left hand is not used, so should be allowed to “go where it will”.

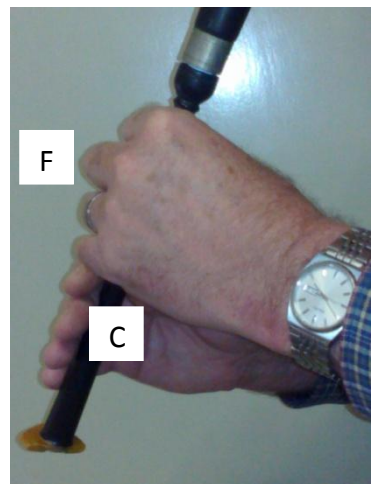
As you can see, I have quite large hands, and yet I grip the chanter and use my fingertips to cover the E, F, G’ and A’ holes, while my left hand fingers use the distance between my first and second joints to cover the B, C, and D holes.

Since I have little fingers which do not even reach the topmost joint of my B and E fingers, I use my little finger tip to cover the A hole.

The chanter should be gently held. If you relax your grip very slightly, the chanter should begin

to slide downwards through your fingers. Now tighten them just a bit, and you will have found the “grip” required for relaxed playing, which gives you the best chance to play well, fluently, as you let your fingers respond to your mental command.

(d) Final View of Hand Positions while playing Low G.



This picture reveals that the tip of my C finger is not held “stiffly straight” while it is at rest. It also shows clearly that my F finger, in order to use its fingertip to cover the F hole is also “relaxed”.

Because my F middle finger is half a joint longer than my ring finger (E), I needed to make this adjustment early on, because otherwise, my finger-joint crease would not have made a satisfactory surface to close the F hole.

Learner’s and teacher’s have to allow for the differences which go with the territory of being human. No one way will suit all.

It is helpful to look into a mirror while standing, and while standing and blowing; “watch” to ensure that you don’t “hunch” (stand tall at all times). Relax, and enjoy.

(e) High G gracenote “frozen in time” on Low G (G’ finger raised).



The High G finger is raised one finger thickness approximately from the chanter. All of the other gracenotes are played by the lifting and lowering of one finger – the finger concerned – eg High A (left thumb), High G, F, E, D, C, B, and Low A. All of these can be played from Low G to Low G, and you should be able to perform all of these “in turn” – “up” and “down”.

“Watch” and “listen” to ensure that each gracenote finger is raised by the same amount; make sure that each gracenote “sounds the same” as the one preceding and following it.

If necessary, write the letter names of the notes onto your fingers, so that you can clearly identify each one in turn as you play them, and to firmly establish their sound in your head. If your teacher asks you to raise your D finger, you should know which.

(g) High A gracenote finger “suspended in time” (A’ thumb finger raised).



As in (e) and (f) above, the High A (thumb) finger is raised one finger thickness from the High A hole of the chanter, so that High A gracenote is sounded, until the High A hole is closed.

From this position, note how my left hand and unused “little finger” has been allowed to “float” a little below the level of the chanter. This is quite alright for those with “short” little fingers like mine, but those who have little fingers almost the same length as their E “ring finger”, this could be a problem.

If this is the case, the little finger should be held comfortably “above” the chanter at all times. It most definitely should not be allowed to “lock” below the chanter, since this restricts movement of your left hand fingers.

(f) “One finger thickness” does not mean more than that.



This is a physical demonstration showing what is meant by “one finger thickness”, where I’m holding the tip of my D finger under my High G finger.

This is the consistent distance “up” to which you should raise all of your gracenote fingers.

“Up” and “down” at the same “rate” or “speed” will ensure that all of your gracenotes are of the same length.

If you go “higher” than this, you are wasting valuable effort and time, and risk “mis-hitting” the hole when your finger comes back down.

When gracenotes are combined into “movements”, the gracenote fingers should consistently “sound” the same, though of different pitch.

(h) C “Melody” Note, correctly fingered as you have learned in the scale.



Note here that the B finger is raised at least one finger thickness from the B hole.

The C finger should be raised sufficiently to ensure that this is the case. How much the C finger must be raised will depend on individual hands, but the rule here is that we should not “throw” our fingers too far from the chanter, whichever melody notes we are playing.

This wastes a lot of effort for no effect, and makes more possible the “mis-hitting” of holes when the fingers are lowered.

The thumb of the right hand should not be allowed to creep up or down from its most functional position – ie underneath the rear of the C and D fingers and holes.

(i) F Melody Note “correctly fingered” as you have learned in the scale.



Note here that my Low A, E and F fingers are raised to at least one finger thickness from the chanter. The unused little finger of the left hand is allowed to “go where it feels most comfortable”.

Remember where the thumb of the right hand should be positioned – between the C and D fingers, but at the rear, for maximum control.

It should also be remembered that when the chanter is held vertically, the chanter should begin to slip downwards, as soon as the fingers

are relaxed, just slightly. Your fingers should remain “pink” (blood flowing) at all times, to allow the most relaxed, “in-control” playing.

(j) Incorrect method for playing F Melody Note (fingers too high).



Note here that I have deliberately raised my Low A, E and F finger higher than necessary for the proper sounding of F.

Some very good players can manage this, but at the rash expenditure of much effort.

It just does not make sense that the possibility of “mis-hitting” is increased for no other gain.

Just how much extra practice would it take to kick so much higher and not fall over ? My guess is, a lot !

Surely, common-sense must rule. Otherwise you are condemning yourself to a lifetime of over-exertion. Like good driving, learner pipers should be well taught.

As mentioned in Section 2, page 10 and elsewhere (and these aspects cannot be emphasized enough): 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.

The chanter should always be “gripped lightly”; the blood should not be squeezed from your fingers (no pressure pale spots). This is to allow you maximum control of your fingers, so that they can easily respond to your own thought control. If your instrument is “too hard” for you, then the extra pressure you have to exert with your left arm will “tense up” the fingers – and straighten them unnecessarily. Blood pressure and heart rate is increased, your body will tire unnecessarily, and your thoughts will become confused as you lose concentration. Mistakes are bound to be made.

This is why you should take advantage of all the tools available to you as you progress, learning all the while. Do not allow yourself to make the same mistake twice. Learn to relax prior to physical exertion; make the most of rest periods; build up your stamina before competitions; make sure that your instrument is in your total control, and that you have everything pre-planned.

Most of these things I have not done at some time or other. My most detrimental to myself trait is that I never seemed to get the time to plan out my repertoire before playing at an event, so that I often played just what came into my head “at the time”. This is all very well if you have no need to “win”. Sometimes none of the other people will have properly prepared either, and you may still win the day. But it is still true that “self-disciplined” people are the ones most likely to succeed – and to give the best performances, time and time again – because they have pre-planned.



The above is what we would call today a “grip” exercise. But practice it slowly; try to make your D gracenote “larger” as shown.

This is Part of a DOUBLE CUT or TAORLUIDH.



Strike A with the high G finger then close the Chanter and strike the D finger smartly and raise the little finger.

By adding the E grace note smartly you sound the Double Cut or Taorluidh.



Note the “taorluath” from D played with B gracenote. This is used in “piobaireachd”. Practice it now.



The above “taorluath with ‘redundant’ A” is not normally played today . But practice it slowly, anyway.



A ROUND AND DISTINCT MOVEMENT.

The first notes being doubled be sure to put on the second notes smartly with the E finger.



When this “lowest line” is played in “4/4 time” by halving the number of bars, this becomes a “strathspey” exercise.



The figure 3 signifies to be done in the time of two.



This is the most difficult of the class. Three notes being on the same line, care must be taken to strike the second and third immediately after the first.



as the “redundant (low) A”. Time has changed what once was “the fashion”, and we no longer play taorluaths this way. There can be no doubt that this change was to accommodate the more difficult “competition-style” March, Strathspeys and Reels, etc. These are probably played at a faster tempo than before. When the Highland Regiments were formed, the Army, for its Militaristic purposes (as any Army does), regulated every aspect of piping, including the tempo at which bands were to perform. As always, “regulation” is a double edged sword – it “cuts” as it “rounds”. **Sec 7 Page 38**

As I have previously mentioned on Pages K and T of my “Update to 2012” (my Piping Memoirs) 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.”

Note how MacPhee describes the “Taorluath” as the “Double Cut” or “Taorluidh”, and writes it with what we describe today

A SHARP AND DISTINCT MOVEMENT.

The first note being cut the value is put on the second.

This movement is done with the G and D fingers and care must be taken, to strike the second note smartly with the D finger.



Notice here how Donald MacPhee writes of “A sharp and distinct movement”, then of “a distinct and round movement”, and then that “another note is added in Reel playing”.

A DISTINCT AND ROUND MOVEMENT.

This is very useful in playing Reels and Jigs; it is done with the G, D and E grace notes. Care must be taken to strike the E finger smartly after the D.



He does not say it, but here is clear reference to the playing of Strathspeys as “dotted and cut” tunes, whereas Reels are to be played more “roundly”.

Another note is added in Reel playing.



In “reel” playing, practice more “evenly” at first, then “dot” and “cut” to taste.



Strathspeys and Reels are dance tunes which have sprung from militaristic necessity and tradition. They were necessary to whip soldiers into a frenzy of ecstasy

as they participated or watched from the sidelines the dancers whose feet nimbly defied the crossed swords, and whose hands imitated the antlers of male deer stags, all the time “circling” and “thrusting” with arm and leg to the wild strains of the pipes. The pipers skill at sounding and presenting these tunes with their “regularity” and “unwavering drone tone” completes the hypnotic affect: the audience is transfixed, entranced.

The group revels in its greatness, and ready to hear the mob’s call to action: “to death, or victory” ! Only modern psycho-therapeutic drugs, or deep meditation to the point of “kundalini” (or spiritual awakening; bliss to the point of foolhardiness) can match this, with the ever present unwavering “fundamental” drone tone. It is no wonder that the Scottish Highland Bagpipe captured the hearts and minds of the Highlanders, when it replaced the harp, and copied its “strumming” chords and effects, and pentatonic scales. [Concise Tutor for Practice Chanter 1973 – 2012. Chalmers Sec 7, Page 39](#)

Great and noble deeds have been done, but also, and unfortunately, ignoble barbarism also, by the unthinking ignorant. When we allow ourselves to be “whipped up” into a frenzy of “patriotic” fervour, we can “go over the top”, beyond what is reasonable to a sane person. Rape and pillage, fire and sword, are the inevitable consequence of a mob run amuk. These are things that most people will regard with abhorrence, when viewed in the cold light of day. Yes, “militaristic regulation” is a double edged sword – it “cuts” as it “rounds”, as it makes the “extra-ordinary” ordinary. Very ordinary.

Exercise in Timing 6/8 versus 2/4 from "Hells Bells".

The image displays a musical score for a practice chanter exercise. It consists of ten staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The music is written in a single melodic line. The score is divided into two main sections. The first section is in 6/8 time and contains the first six staves. The second section is in 2/4 time and contains the remaining four staves. The transition from 6/8 to 2/4 is marked with a double bar line and the new time signature. The 2/4 section includes triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a group of notes) and various rhythmic ornaments such as grace notes and slurs. The notation includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and dotted rhythms.

Miscellaneous Exercises Continued

Before we proceed with the exercise from "Hell's Bells", please have a close look at the "round and distinct" movements described by Donald MacPhee two pages earlier. You **should** have noticed that the "C and B doublings" we would normally play using a High G (or G') gracenote on C followed by a D gracenote on C have *sometimes* been shown using "double D gracenotes on C". This was the "style" of the time. If you practiced these movements as written, "congratulations", for you are "observant" and can follow written instructions well ! Congratulations !

This next exercise nearly "brought me to drink", as I battled the "Piob Mhor" music writing system I'm using. "It" doesn't like that I'm writing parts each containing six bars. Hence the inconsistency in "presentation". Sorry !

At first attempt, the 6/8 "tune" should be played at no more than 60 **Quaver's** per minute (ie three "beats" for every dotted crotchet beat normally counted, which equates to 20 "dotted crotchet" beats per minute. I've tried to progressively introduce "concepts" before "changing tack" into 2/4 time. Stay alert; try to play exactly what is written. However written, each part is "repeated".

Note that the "movements" or "embellishments" **take time from the melody note which follows.** The first beats of the 5th and 6th bars of the 1st part should **not** sound the same, even though the same notes are played. "Make haste", or "quicken" slowly.

Pipers' Club of Victoria March E.A. Christie, 1989

This was the tune selected to win First Prize in a competition, judged by the late P/M Donald MacLeod M. B. E, the then Patron of the Club, who made comment on this tune as follows:

"I like this tune. It has a simple meaningful theme, which permeates throughout the tune. The supporting phrases blend, they blend well, making this piece one that will, I think, catch on; the whole is well constructed, it's tuneful, and in this piece the long carryover notes are of some contextual value. I award this tune first place."

Alan W R MacBean was awarded 2nd place, while Wendy Gallagher was awarded 3rd place. Eric Christie's tune thus became known as "The Piper's Club of Victoria", and a very nice tune it is.

I don't know that it has achieved wide use, but I hope that my insertion of it here will breathe new life into it. The tune certainly deserves recognition along with its composer, a strongly competitive piobaireachd player in the Open Grade.

Eric came to Australia from New Zealand, and was a long time piping judge until his hearing became a problem. Thankfully, this has been

somewhat restored by the magic of modern medicine. Eric worked as a scientist, and introduced all at the Pipers' Club to the "Water Manometer" as a new means to demonstrate "even pressure", long before the "steady needle" of the Korg Electronic Tuner was used for this purpose also.

The Pibroch of Donald Dubh March

The image displays a musical score for a pibroch march. It consists of six staves of music. The title 'The Pibroch of Donald Dubh' is written above the first staff, and the word 'March' is written above the second staff. The music is written in a single melodic line with various note values, rests, and phrasing slurs. The score is divided into four parts by vertical bar lines. The fourth part features a box containing two options: '1st' and '2nd', indicating alternative phrasings for that section. The music is written in a treble clef and appears to be in a common or similar time signature.

This has been a very popular massed band tune for many years in Victoria, and I would think worldwide. Here it has been written by my second teacher Bill Wallace. I would guess that this copy would have been prepared by him while he was Pipe Major for 5RVR (Melbourne's then "Scottish Regiment"). An ex-serviceman, Bill had been a piper in the Royal Caledonian Pipe Band of Melbourne, and later was Pipe Corporal in my first band at the time I joined. I would suppose that he wrote this tune as he did to accommodate the "extra bar for the second time" in the fourth part – even though he certainly recognised that "four bars across each line" more clearly shows "repeated passages" as an aid to memory.

Notice how he has used the "solid" D "throw" whenever it occurs. This tune is a very good "exercise" in that it has many repeated "shakes" in the first and second parts, and "grips" in the third. Interestingly, he did not indicate "top hand shakes" in the fourth part, but preferred to play High G gracenotes instead. I think most players today would play as I do – playing Low A shakes to separate the E's, and E shakes to separate the F's. In practise, of course, it would be difficult for a judge to hear the difference, if they are similarly (played) "timed". But good players should do as written.

This tune has fourteen entries in "The New Melody Directory", which shows its popularity, and also a different way of spelling – Dubh as "Dhu".

PIPE SERGEANT J. BARCLAY



This is what I think of as an excellent tune, written by I know not whom, but it clearly shows the merits of writing the music with four bars across each line.

Here the repeated bars can be clearly identified. For instance the fifth bar of the first part is the same as the first, and the sixth almost the same as the second.

The third and fourth bars are repeated in the second part and almost so in the third part. The seventh and eighth bars of the first part are replicated exactly in the remaining parts.

The composer is to be congratulated here for a tune which has simplicity and real “swing”. My search for this tune in “The New Melody Directory” did not reveal the source, for the tune does not appear either by name or melody.

There might be a clue however, since the next tune “Stuart Robertson” is written in the same hand, and has been noted just once in “The New Melody Directory” as coming from the “US Bi-Centennial Collection” and reveals its composer as “A Stewart, Bulwayo 1953”.

This tune seems to have been written in the pen and ink or fountain pen days, judging by the ink splotch on the 6th line (above).

Stuart Robertson "A Stewart, Bulway 1953"

So here is "Stuart Robertson" which was probably first published in "US Bi-Centennial Collection, Volume 2".

A quick "Google-search" further revealed that this collection was put together by Peter MacLeod (Junior) in 1976 to celebrate the work of his father Peter Roderick MacLeod, the composer of many famous tunes, including "The Conundrum".

This is a tune I have played at the Pipers' Club, where I took certain "liberties" with it, by playing three D gracenotes where one is shown in the first and the fifth bars of the first part, and, I think, repeating the second line of the first part on the repeats of each part thereafter.

AS noted previously, the writing of bagpipe music showing just four bars per line is a boon for spotting the similarities, if not the replications of "phrases" in the tune.

If you are "lazy" like me, you will find it saves much time just placing "ditto marks" in the appropriate "spaces".

In approaching this task I have set myself, twenty years on, I am constantly amazed at the progress the world has made, since the days of typewriters, carbon paper, and stencils, and I thank my good fortune to have lived to "see it", and to "hear" the difference.

The copy of this tune I had came without a title, but I can recognise a good tune when I see one, and in any case, have heard it played here in Melbourne – but where ? Who by ?

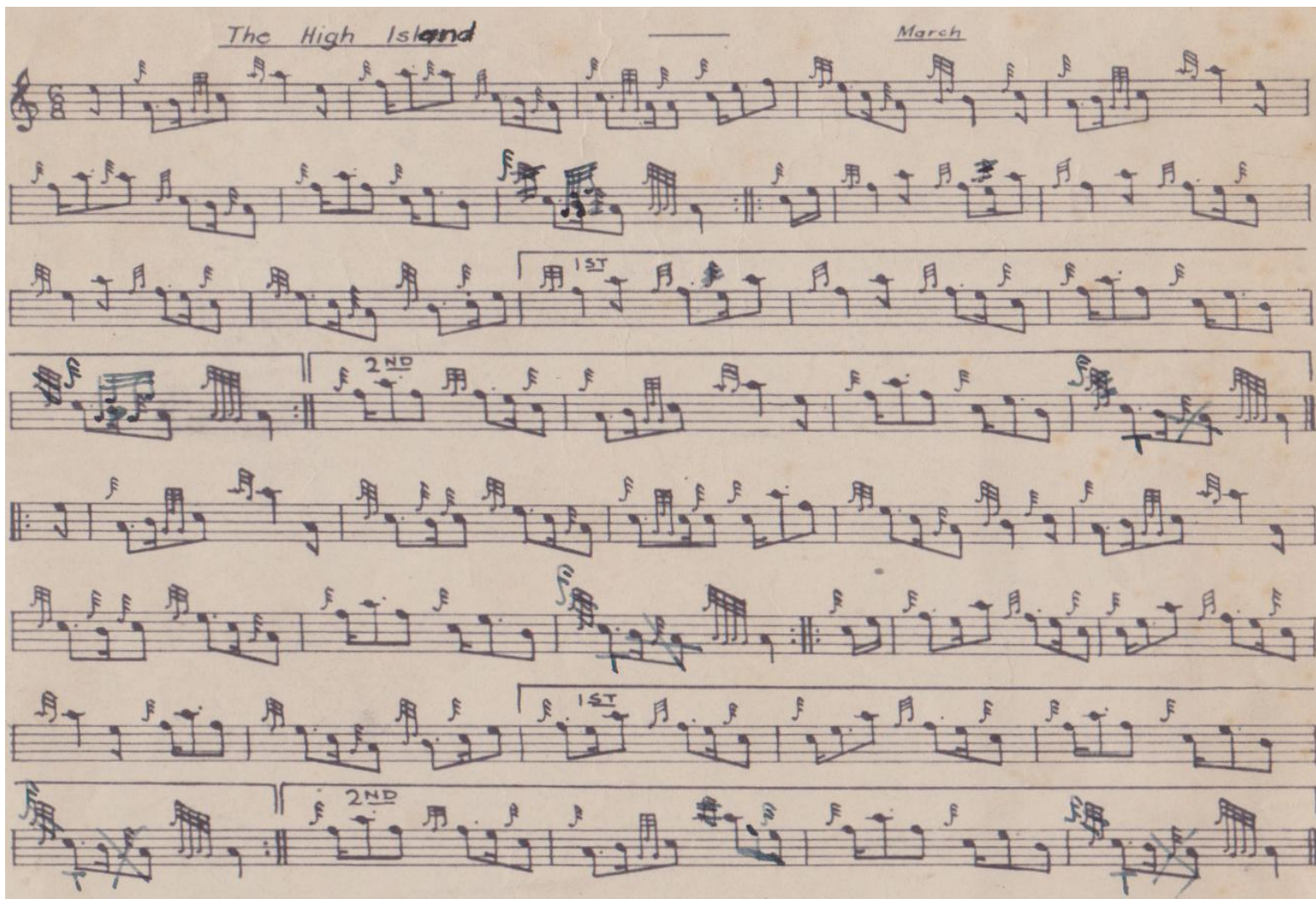
So I used my “detective skills”, transcribed the first four beats of the tune into my “New Melody Directory” code, and “voila”, the name of the tune and the (then) books it appeared in were revealed, along with the composer’s name – P/M J M MacKenzie.

The NMD code for this 6/8 tune is:
/cdb aa /cee eca / with starting note A.
The corresponding “timing” is:
/Qsq cq /sQq Qsq / with starting note time q.

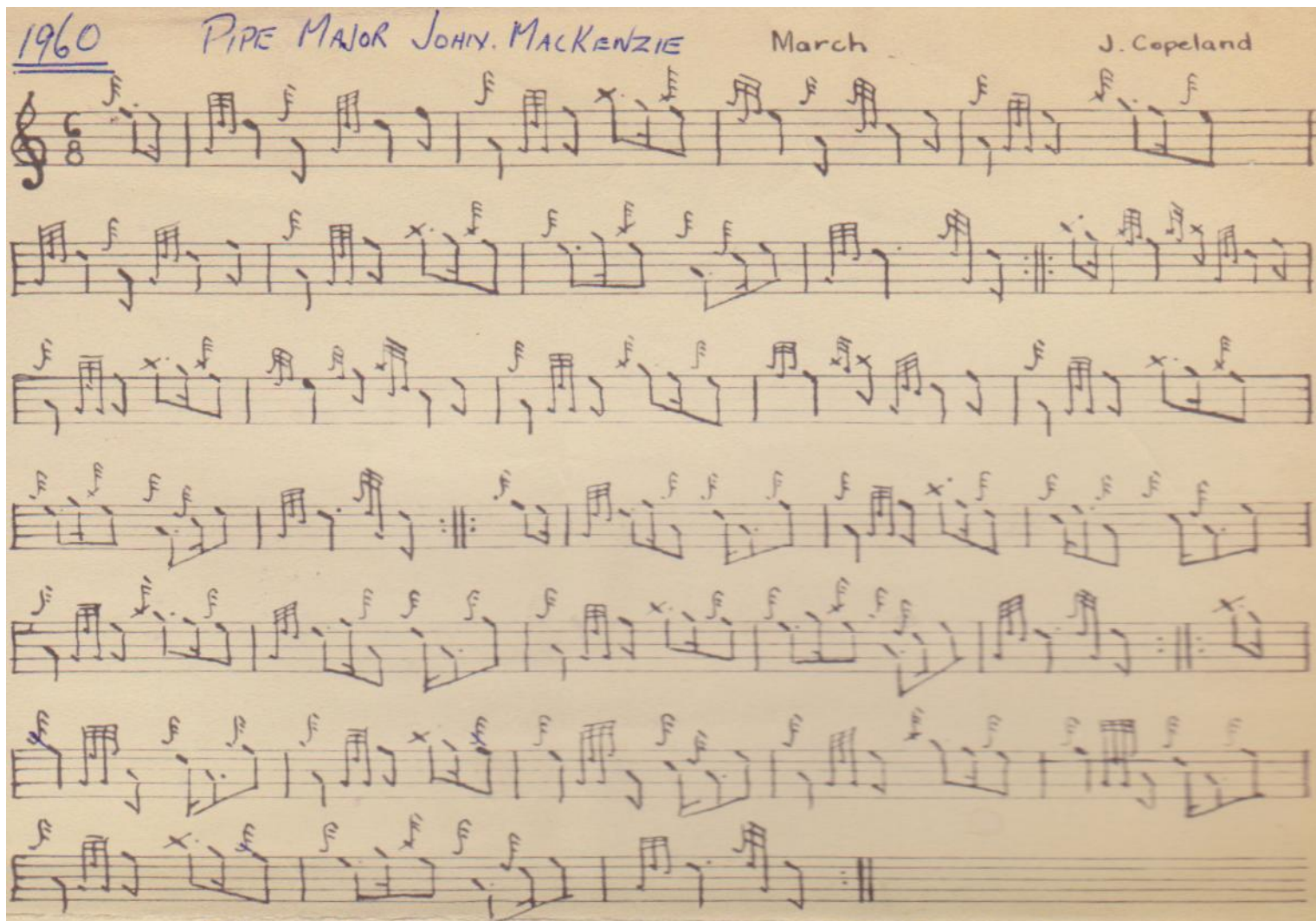
The New Melody Directory also confirmed that the tune was written as a 6/8 March, and has four parts.

The composers own publication (John MacKenzie’s Collection of Bagpipe Music Volume 1) probably does not reveal the date of its publication for this is not shown in the NMD, but the second book which contains it “Scots Guards Standard Settings Volume 2” is listed as having been published in 1981.

A “Google-Search” for “**The MacNeil’s of Ugadale**” should do the rest to help “fill in the blanks” – and provide “youtube” performances.



This was one of my first tunes learned for the Melbourne Highland Pipe Band. Others I remember were “MacLeod of Mull”, and “Angus MacKinnon”. In looking up “The High Island” in my “New Melody Directory, it seemed that the tune might have been called “Royal Review” or “Edinburgh Review 1882” – from the notes and timing of its first four beats (and starting note). This tune is described in books 132 and 151 and both have a tune of three parts only, in 6/8 time. The composer of this tune was apparently “D Bowman”. However a quick “Google-Search” took me to the alternate name of the above tune (dimly remembered) as “An Eilean Ard” and Jim McGillivray’s website “Pipe Tunes” at <http://www.pipetunes.ca>, which says that the composer was a “William Fergusson”, and that the tune is rated as “difficult” and having more parts, perhaps. As you can see from Bill Wallace’s writing of the tune, there can be no doubt that different “settings” and “parts” will appear over time, as “fashions” change to “heavier” or “lighter” styles.



As I've mentioned previously on Page C of my "Update to 2012", Jack Copeland was a very talented player, and played Hornpipes, Jigs and Reels to my entire satisfaction. I remember him being nervous when this tune was presented to the Band, as noted "nameless" by Bill Wallace. We played it as our "quickstep" the following year, I think the last with John MacKenzie as P/M. Although I play it occasionally to honour "them", I've not heard it since.

Jack was very pedantic about his "tuning" regime, which was "get the chanter E and Low A in balance", and the High A should then sound an octave above Low A. If not, tape the holes needing adjustment to "flatten" them (so that the drones do not "shift" when playing them). Since Jack had the sweetest sound in the band to my ear, who was I to question that? Our other leading players were no slouches either; I looked up to all of them.

THE BRITISH LEGION

The image displays a musical score for a 6/8 march titled "THE BRITISH LEGION". The score is written on ten staves, with the first staff beginning with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with frequent beaming and slurs. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots. The notation is dense and characteristic of traditional Scottish piping.

The British Legion is not known by Name or Melodic Sequence in “The New Melody Directory”. I present it here for you because it is written in the same hand that produced two other 6/8 marches of note here.

On “Google-Searching” the name, I was again quickly drawn to Jim McGillivray’s fantastic piping website, and on to one “Robert Meldrum” who apparently became Pipe Major of the Royal British Legion Pipe Band at an advanced age, after being the youngest appointed Pipe major in the British Army.

But I’ll allow you to do your own research on this famous man (see “Composers’ bios” at <http://www.pipetunes.ca>). See some fantastic pictures of famous players. It seems that many of them in the employ of the gentry etc were well photographed with all their many medals !

But it seems that the tune here may not be of his composition, for it is not listed as such on the website.

It is of unusual composition, which is another reason for my adding it here. While there are plenty of man-made “rules” to follow, they are all meant to be broken, or so it would seem, in “piping”, at least. The third part follows rather closely the second, but no matter for this composer, who probably liked to confound his critics. If this was a Robert Meldrum tune, he could “thumb his nose” to them all, and get away with it !

Not Sleep! (Dreaming) Donald Chalmers 23/7/2000 84 beats/min

Musical score for 'Not Sleep! (Dreaming)' in 2/4 time, 84 beats per minute. The score consists of three systems of a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The first system has a repeat sign at the beginning. The music features a simple, rhythmic melody with eighth and quarter notes.

This tune came to me in a dream, and I roused to wake myself up to write it out in my “shorthand” developed for my work on “The New Melody Directory” 15 years earlier. There had been a long spell when I’d not thought about pipe bands, but then “this came out”.

I’d dreamt that I heard in the distance a band fast approaching, playing the same tune over and over, and that the closer the band got, the better it sounded. So I rushed over to see which band it was to be playing such a simple tune. And it came, and passed me by, and I knew not a soul in it, nor the uniform. Nor did the bass drum tell.

Moving In 80beats/min Donald Chalmers 18/11/1998

Musical score for 'Moving In' in 2/4 time, 80 beats per minute. The score consists of four systems of a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The first system has a repeat sign at the beginning. The music features a simple, rhythmic melody with eighth and quarter notes.

“Moving In” also “came to me” quickly, and was noted down in the same fashion, before I forgot it.

You might note that I did not follow my own advice in the presentation of “Not Sleep !”; this was just something that my music program “insisted upon”, and I, being too tired to protest after all my usual ministrations, “gave up”, and printed it out as it was.

Nor have I followed my advice in the writing of “Moving In”, in that I have not placed “ditto marks” in the 5th and 6th bars of each part under their respective 1st and 2nd bars. The reason ? I have no idea how to do it “program-wisely”, and in any case, once you have coded the 1st two bars of each part, it is just too easy to do a “cut and paste job”. And, if you keep an “eagle eye out” for such things, your mind will not miss the repetition, also to be found in the 3rd, 7th and 8th bars.

The Prince of Wales' Wedding March Donald Chalmers 29/7/1981

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled 'The Prince of Wales' Wedding March' by Donald Chalmers, dated 29/7/1981. The score is written for a single melodic line in 4/4 time, spanning ten staves. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings like accents and slurs. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

I think that this tune “came to me” the “last part” first, and that I built up the rest to suit. Obviously, this was around the time of the Prince of Wales’ first marriage, a time where the whole of the United Kingdom erupted into carefully staged celebrations, with “bonfires” lit in every corner of the country, and “beamed” all around the world.

I originally named it “Charles and Dianna”, but had second thoughts after the all too public divorce; perhaps I had been overly familiar....

I hope that His Highness likes it, and will not mind.

The late P/M Angus MacDonald has told me that the Queen sometimes asks for a tune by name, and knows if there is a mistake, or if the wrong tune is played. Her mother was similarly interested.

Her uncle the Duke of Windsor learned the pipes as a young Prince of Wales and composed one tune “Mallorca” (H.R.H. the PRINCE OF WALES K. G. - 1934) which has been reproduced in two books identified by “The New Melody Directory”.

Oh to have been surrounded by the very best of players at Balmoral, as well as at Buckingham Palace, and so on.... Oh, the pageantry of it all....

So here’s to hoping that this tune will find favour in due course. And I won’t mind if you’d like to play it starting from the last part; in fact, I think it goes well as a “five parted” tune. So perhaps, the last to start it and the last to finish it off !

Long Donald - Chalmers Ago 2003

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Long Donald' in 4/4 time. The score is written on 12 staves, each containing a single melodic line. The notation includes various note values such as minims, crotchets, and quavers, along with rests and phrasing slurs. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The music is presented in a clear, legible format suitable for a practice chanter.

Now this tune is a “re-hash” of an old theme “Long, long ago”, as you should readily recognize. There must be many permutations and combinations around this simple tune.

It “calls out” for the playing of “seconds” and “thirds” in bandwork. As I’ve mentioned previously, in a group of 8 players, not more than two should play “seconds”, and only one “thirds”; otherwise, the main theme will be “overpowered” by the interlacing melodies.

In playing “seconds” and “thirds” it makes no sense to “grace” them differently to the basic tune. That is, It is counterproductive, to be playing a “Doubling”, “Grip”, “Birl”, “Shake” or Taorluath in seconds or thirds when the “firsts” arrangement calls for a simple gracenote.

“Movements” in the “firsts” should either be “matched” (doubling for doubling), or “simplified” to ensure that the tunes overall theme can still be clearly heard (and not “muddled” or “muddled” with conflicting technique.

Low A, High A, and E can be used anywhere as “counterpoint”, since these are the basis of the instrument. Otherwise notes “one line or space - above or below” such notes can be used – eg C with Low A or E, or D with B or F. Low G’s should be avoided if possible, since “that” is too dominant a sound.

I have resisted using “minims” or “semi-breves”, because (I believe) it is better to indicate the four beats in each bar, to minimize mental confusion (S, w, m, w – L, r, l, r – etc).

You will note that I was unable to get my Piob Mhor bagpipe music program to show the usual three tails on my Low G “touches” or “shakes” to Low A. Hopefully, your brain will

The Three Legged Frog March Donald Chalmers 1/9/1981



The musical score for 'The Three Legged Frog March' is written in 4/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The music features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, with some notes tied across bar lines. The melody is simple and rhythmic, typical of a pipe tune.

In my writing of this tune, I have again resisted using “minims” or “semi-breves”, so that “ties” are shown to indicate that (say) there are “two beats”, or “four beats” without any gracenote separating them (as in the first and second bars respectively).

The only example of my use of “minims” in this selection of tunes, was in Eric Christies “Pipers’ Club of Victoria” winning tune (see Section 9 Page 41). This was to honour Eric’s original presentation.

Obviously, seasoned musicians should not have a problem with this; it is standard practice for orchestral instruments, but “unusual” for the pipes.

Song of the Delatite River - Donald Chalmers ?1980



The musical score for 'Song of the Delatite River' is written in 9/8 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 9/8 time signature. The music features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, with some notes tied across bar lines. The melody is simple and rhythmic, typical of a pipe tune.

“The Song of the Delatite River” was composed around Christmas 1978, while I was on holiday with my young family at “Gough’s Bay”, near Mansfield Victoria. However the expected “bay” views were nowhere to be seen, since the Lake Eildon Reservoir had been depleted, due to years of drought. This was the precursor to many more such years. In 2012 it is now largely replenished.

We drove further into the “High Country” and found respite from the oppressive heat in the Delatite River, “there” only a sparking brook. This is where I penned the tune down, “longhand”, so that I would not forget it, while being “splashingly pestered” by my children gambling among the rocks and pools. And my joy was complete.....

The Tickler 80 beats/min Donald Chalmers 12/5/1998



“The Tickler” was conceived and found its expression in my “shorthand” writing of it some twenty years after “The Song of the Delatite River”.

Although I took joy in playing it at the Pipers’ Club, it remained unwritten until I transposed it onto Dr MacMillan’s Piob Mhor system.

“9/8’s” have three beats to each bar, and so, like 3/4 tunes, the marching “strong pulse” alternates between left and right feet, as shown – on or after each bar line. They are usually written in pipe tunes with eight bars, repeated; then on to the next part, which is also of eight bars, repeated.

The difference between 9/8’s and 3/4’s is not in the way the strong beat presents itself. Both are “**Strong**, medium, weak” (or “**Left**, right, left, **Right**, left, right” etc) tunes. As we learned in Section 1 Pages 2-4, the “difference” stems from how many (“melody” or “main” or “thema” or “stems down, large-headed”) notes each beat is divided into.

In 3/4 time, each “crotchet beat” can be “left alone”, undivided, or can be “divided” (split) into “two” or “four” equal parts. Therefore, we may expect to see each “beat” represented by (one) crotchet “c”, or two quavers “q q”, or four semi-quavers “s s s s” or their equivalents: a dotted quaver with a semi-quaver “Q s”, or “s Q”, or a dotted semi-quaver with a demi-semi-quaver “S d S d” etc. In this “alpha” appropriate system, anything “undotted” is a “lower case” letter, while “dotted notes” are “capitalised” (because they have a larger [time] value of “time and a half”).

However, in 9/8 time, each “beat” is “dotted”. It can thus be divided into three equal parts. Therefore, the above tune’s first line of four bars (12 beats) can be noted in “shorthand” (and ignoring the “graces” and “movements” [stems up]) as: a /dfa d da /def A AGf /Gfe f d /fGf f e /
Similarly, “The Tickler” ‘s “timing” may be represented (which completes the “picture”) as: q /Qsq C cq /Qsq C Qsq /Qsq C C /Qsq C C /

By now, you should be ready to transcribe all of the tunes you have come across so far. This is an easy system which has a one to one correspondence between each note and its value. As you progress, you will realize that the graces and movements pipers use to make their tunes more interesting do not make up the “melody” of the “tune” at all, and can easily be added according to skill, and personal preference. Excellent players may prefer to play all sorts of complex embellishments to “showcase” their acquired technique, but they will not compromise the basic melody, which is “fundamental”.

Jack Copeland's Fancy - Hornpipe

The image displays a musical score for 'Jack Copeland's Fancy - Hornpipe'. It consists of ten staves of music, each containing a single melodic line. The time signature is 2/4. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests. There are several instances of 'doublings' (two notes beamed together) and 'shakes' (a note with a 'C' grace note). The score is divided into four parts, with the first part starting with an introductory note. The notation is clear and legible, with a focus on the rhythmic and melodic structure of the piece.

I don't remember if Jack Copeland told me the name of this tune, but I haven't been able to find it in "The New Melody Directory", or anywhere else. It was a tune I asked him for when I heard it and he wrote it out by hand for me. I could not find it in my collection, so have had to reconstitute it from memory, as I have played it.

I asked him for it because you can choose to play it simply through out, as in the 1st and second bars of the first part, or play it as written here, where "doublings" are introduced 3rd and 4th and 7th and 8th bars, or play it with doublings throughout.

If you have an "eye for detail", you should note that I have written the "shake" on D with a "C" gracenote in the second part, but with a Low G gracenotes in the 4th part. This is merely to remind you of the options available. Generally speaking, the two "styles" ("light" and "heavy") are not mixed up together in the same tune.

You might decide otherwise to show your versatility. If you plan to do so in "competition", it might be wise to alert the "judge" to your plan beforehand, lest "inconsistency" be cited as a reason for point deduction.

"Hornpipes", "Polka's", "Reels" and "Jigs" are normally played more "roundly" (evenly) than are Marches and Strathspeys etc, so it is wise to practice them "evenly" (without "dots" and "cuts") until you can play them "evenly", and "well". I have suggested how you might slightly "point" this tune, commencing only at the 4th bar of the 4th part; you can do so as you wish throughout the tune, but must not make it sound like a 2/4 March.

You can also (if you wish), play this tune without "introductory" notes, as shown in the 4th part, with or without the "double" High A "doubling" shown in the last bar of the 4th part. If you choose to learn this technique, you may wish to consider brushing the thumb "downwards", and then "up" to complete the movement.