

# How the Great Highland Bagpipe was taught in the Golden Age

If you have ever heard two Pipers conversing with each other on Pipe Music, you will undoubtedly hear some singing which may sound a bit like this: Hee dorumm a hidorumm a dro dray hidolumm. These are remnants of a system of singing the music, which was the only way of passing a tune on before they figured out how to write it out in staff notation, as we know today. This system was devised for what we know today as Piobaireachd (Pibroch), the classical music of the Highland Bagpipe. The name given to this type of singing is Canntaireachd (Cantroch) which is a Scots Gaelic word meaning chanting. This system came from a Gaelic speaking society. That is why all the pronunciation of the syllables is how a Gaelic speaker would say them but don't worry, there is a guide on how to pronounce the "words". As a further help to singing Canntaireachd there is a modern twist I promised you on the main page, that is Karaoke. You can download a Karaoke player onto your computer, free of charge and play Karaoke files as you sing along. This helps with the timing of the music which you don't get from the written words. Click on one of the following choices if you are returning, otherwise please read on.

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I am going to show you how to sing a tune called "Glengarry's Lament" but first you should download the Karaoke player from the following site:

[http://www.vanbasco.com/midi\\_player\\_with\\_full\\_screen\\_karaoke\\_display/](http://www.vanbasco.com/midi_player_with_full_screen_karaoke_display/)

As you go through the installation, make sure you choose the plugin option for your browser such as Navigator or Explorer and also make

it your default Karaoke player. Do not make it your default MIDI player if you already have a favourite one, choose any other options as you wish.

OK. When you click on the Tune File with the .kar extention, the player will load and you can play the example without leaving the site. When you use VanBoscoe's, you can slow the music down temporarily or alter the pitch to suite your voice by clicking on the Control Button on the Karaoke Player and then adjust the slides to suit your preference. Remember, this is a singing method. I will write each lesson in text format for those who don't want to use Karaoke and follow that with the appropriate Karaoke file for playing. If you wish to save the file on your computer for practice off site, click on the Floppy Disc icon on the Karaoke player and save it to a folder of your choice.

It is not necessary to learn every note and gracenote before learning your first tune but those who want to do that can. Study the section on [Pronunciation](#). In the meantime, we will learn the syllables to our first tune, which is Glengarry's Lament.

## Lesson 1. Glengarry's Lament Ground or Urlar

This is the first part of the tune called the Ground or Urlar in Gaelic. It is the main melody and is a simple arrangement of phrases of a type of tune called Primary.

As a primary tune it consists of three phrases. A, B1, and B2. They are arranged as the following table:

|        |   |        |        |
|--------|---|--------|--------|
| Line 1 | A | A      | B<br>1 |
| Line 2 | A | B<br>2 | B<br>1 |
| Line 3 | A | B<br>1 |        |

Here are the individual phrases: Click on the underlined syllables to see the pronunciation, then click on the word [return](#) to come back here. You can do that as many times as you need to, it is quite

painless. Do check the pronunciation as these syllables don't always sound as they look.

Phrase A.

Hi EN O TRO DIN, HO E VE HO DIN

Phrase B1.

TRO VE CHE EN HO E, Hi HIO DIN

Phrase B2.

HO E CHE EN HO E, Hi HO DIN

The Urlar or Ground of the tune goes as follows. *Click on the Karaoke filename to load the player and sing along:*

You can move the Karaoke screen to a convenient place by dragging it with your mouse.

Karaoke file: [Glen.kar](#)

Line 1

Hi EN O DRO DIN, HO E VE HO DIN, Hi EN O DRO DIN, HO E VE HO DIN, DRO VE CHE EN HO E, Hi HIO DIN.

Line 2

Hi EN O DRO DIN, HO E VE HO DIN, HO E CHE EN HO E, Hi HO DIN, DRO VE CHE EN HO E, Hi HIO DIN.

Line 3

Hi EN O DRO DIN, HO E VE HO DIN, DRO VE CHE EN HO E, Hi HIO DIN.

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**Lesson 2. Glengarry's Lament** Dithis Variation, Singling and Doubling

Following the Ground the tune takes off into a series of variations the first one being a Dithis Variation. This word is pronounced Jeeish. This variation is constructed by taking the main melody notes from

the Ground with a G gracenote on them and alternating them with short Low A or Doh with an E gracenote. Following the same arrangement of the phrases which are:

Phrase A.

[HIN-EN HO-EN CHE-EN HO-EN](#)

Phrase B1.

[HIO-EN HE-HIN CHE-EN HIO-EN](#) (you will notice in some places the short note is a Low A or Doh with a G Gracenote instead of an E Gracenote. This is because it is not possible to play an E gracenote following the note E or higher on the chanter).

Phrase B2.

[HIO-EN HE-HIN HO-EN HO-EN](#)

The Dithis Singling goes as follows:

[HIN-EN HO-EN CHE-EN HO-EN, HIN-EN HO-EN CHE-EN HO-EN, HIO-EN HE-HIN CHE-EN HIO-EN](#)

[HIN-EN HO-EN CHE-EN HO-EN, HIO-EN HE-HIN HO-EN HO-EN, HIO-EN HE-HIN CHE-EN HIO-EN](#)

[HIN-EN HO-EN CHE-EN HO-EN, HIO-EN HE-HIN CHE-EN HIO-EN.](#)

The Doubling of the Dithis Variation goes a little faster and consists of the main melody notes with G Gracenotes, followed by a repeat of the same note with an E Gracenote on it, instead of the Low A or Doh, like this:

[HIN-EN HO-EO CHE-CHE HO-EO, HIN-EN HO-EO CHE-CHE HO-EO, HIO-EO HE-HE CHE-CHE HIO-EO](#)

[HIN-EN HO-EO CHE-CHE HO-EO, HIO-EO HE-HE HO-EO HO-EO, HIO-EO HE-HE CHE-CHE HIO-EO](#)

[HIN-EN HO-EO CHE-CHE HO-EO, HIO-EO HE-HE CHE-CHE HIO-EO.](#)

**Karaoke file:** [dithis.kar](#) Click on the Karaoke filename to hear both Variations.

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You will notice that each of the main melody notes are in the same sequence in both the Singling and Doubling, this in fact is the main theme of the tune and you would do well to memorize it at this point as it occurs in all subsequent variations. Here are the notes again on their own, each with a G gracenote, unadorned with echoes, piobaireachd movements or cadences. I have underlined the special notes which will have cadences on them in the next variation singlings, similar to the Ground. The phrases are separated by commas and the lines by semi-colons, you will see the same arrangement of phrases persists throughout the tune. This is a great aid to memorization.

HIN HO CHE HO, HIN HO CHE HO, HIO HE CHE HIO

HIN HO CHE HO, HIO HE HO HO, HIO HE CHE HIO

HIN HO CHE HO, HIO HE CHE HIO.

**Karaoke file:** [themal.kar](#) Click on this Karaoke filename to hear the Theme notes.

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### **Lesson 3. Glengarry's Lament.** Taorluath Variation, Singling and Doubling.

The next variation in the sequence is the Taorluath Variation, pronounced Torlooa. It uses the Thernal notes we have just memorized with, each one having a movement following it consisting of four gracenotes ending on a short Low A or Doh. For this we use the word **DARID**. This variation also uses Cadences in the Singling, they are placed on the special notes that were underlined in the main theme. They are G-E-D cadences as in the Ground. **Hi HO DIN** and **Hi HIO DIN**. You will notice the **HO** cadence leaves you suspended and with only a one note difference the **HIO** cadence has a definite feeling of finality. Here is the Singling:

HINDARID HODARID CHEDARID Hi HO DIN,

HINDARID HODARID CHEDARID Hi HO DIN,

HIODARID HEDARID CHEDARID Hi HIO DIN;

HINDARID HODARID CHEDARID Hi HO DIN,

HIODARID HEDARID HODARID HODARID,  
HIODARID HEDARID CHEDARID Hi HIO DIN;  
HINDARID HODARID CHEDARID Hi HO DIN,  
HIODARID HEDARID CHEDARID Hi HIO DIN.

Then the Variation is repeated slightly faster with the Cadences replaced by normal Taorluath Movements:

HINDARID HODARID CHEDARID HODARID,  
HINDARID HODARID CHEDARID HODARID,  
HIODARID HEDARID CHEDARID HIODARID;  
HINDARID HODARID CHEDARID HODARID,  
HIODARID HEDARID HODARID HODARID,  
HIODARID HEDARID CHEDARID HIODARID;  
HINDARID HODARID CHEDARID HODARID,  
HIODARID HEDARID CHEDARID HIODARID.

**Karaoke File:** [taorlu.kar](#) Click on the Karaoke filename to hear both Variations.

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**Lesson 4. Glengarry's Lament.** Crunluath Variation, Singling and Doubling.

Here is the last variation, called the Crunluath (Croonlooa) Variation. It follows very closely the form of the Taorluath Variation except there is a string of seven Gracenotes in the Piobaireachd Movement that follows each Themat Note. They are represented by the word, **BANDRE**. It is sung in two syllables, **BAN** which is sung on Low G or Low Tee and **Dre** which is sung on E or Soh, with a Scots roll on the r. There is a rising sound to this movement as opposed to a falling sound in the Taorluath Movement. Here is the Singling:

HINBANDRE HOBANDRE CHEBANDRE Hi HO DIN,

HINBANDRE HOBANDRE CHEBANDRE Hi HO DIN,  
HIOBANDRE HEBANDRE CHEBANDRE Hi HIO DIN;  
HINBANDRE HOBANDRE CHEBANDRE Hi HO DIN,  
HIOBANDRE HEBANDRE HOBANDRE HOBANDRE,  
HIOBANDRE HEBANDRE CHEBANDRE Hi HIO DIN;  
HINBANDRE HOBANDRE CHEBANDRE Hi HO DIN,  
HIOBANDRE HEBANDRE CHEBANDRE Hi HIO DIN.

The Doubling of the Crunluath goes as follows:

HINBANDRE HOBANDRE CHEBANDRE HOBANDRE,  
HINBANDRE HOBANDRE CHEBANDRE HOBANDRE,  
HIOBANDRE HEBANDRE CHEBANDRE HIOBANDRE;  
HINBANDRE HOBANDRE CHEBANDRE HOBANDRE,  
HIOBANDRE HEBANDRE HOBANDRE HOBANDRE,  
HIOBANDRE HEBANDRE CHEBANDRE HIOBANDRE;  
HINBANDRE HOBANDRE CHEBANDRE HOBANDRE,  
HIOBANDRE HEBANDRE CHEBANDRE HIOBANDRE.

**Karaoke File:** [crunluath.kar](#) Click on the Karaoke filename to hear both Variations.

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Below is a more detailed study of the subject if you really are keen. To practice what you have just learned try this link. ***Practice***

For none Pipers I will give you an explanation of the music. *[Click here for that and then come back.](#)*

## **Ceol Mor**

Ceol Mor is the Gaelic name for Big Music of which the Bagpipe version is commonly referred to as Piobaireachd. The early MacCrimmons are credited with it's introduction to the Bagpipe

around 1600 AD but there is evidence that it had been in use by the Harp or Clarsach for a few hundred years before that in Ireland and Scotland. It is an extended form of music consisting of a theme (Urlar or Ground) and variations and is used to commemorate or lament great events such as battles, or births and deaths of notable people within a Clan. Another important use of Piobaireachd is for rallying the warriors together and inciting them to battle with a type of tune called a Gathering, also there is the March or Challenge. There are other types of tune but these are the most common. To the uninitiated, they all sound similar but there are some differences, mainly in the character of the tune as well as the way it is played.

Most of the tunes are in a [pentatonic](#) or five note scale, of which the pipes are able to play in three different modes. Each of these lends itself to a different flavour of music, rather like the difference between the major and minor keys in modern western music. Some tunes are in a six-note scale and others use the whole range of the pipe chanter. These usually modulate between the different pentatonic modes as the music progresses.

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## **Tonic Sol Fah.**

Most people are familiar with tonic sol fah from their school music programs. The syllables, doh, ra, me, fah, so, la, te, doh, represent the notes in a diatonic scale, which is the scale used for most western music. This system is credited to Rev. John Curwen, but he based it on a system already in existence belonging to Sarah Glover (1786 - 1867) called the Norwich sol -fa. It is thought that Ms. Glover may have been inspired to compile this system following a trip to the Highlands of Scotland in the early eighteen hundreds. It is thought that she heard Canntaireachd being used between Pipers there and her observations sparked the idea for a new system to teach the notes of a tune to singing students.

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## **Canntaireachd**

This system of Canntaireachd I am using is called the Campbell of Nether Lorn version. It was devised by Colin Campbell, a student of the MacCrimmon School, in an attempt to improve on the MacCrimmon version which was not actually written down at the time. He left us a collection of 163 tunes. This is a most extensive



collection of tunes almost from the very source of Piobaireachd, the MacCrimmons.

The system, uses a set of vowel sounds that represent each note on the Chanter. As there has to be a way of representing the many gracenotes and gracenote combinations in the music, these sounds are modified with the use of other letters depending on the gracenotes used.

Canntaireachd does not indicate the timing of the notes in a tune which is a very important aspect of the music. This is probably because Canntaireachd was not originally written down on paper but just sung by the teacher and heard by the pupils directly translating it in their head as they played the examples on the chanter. It is because of this deficiency in Canntaireachd that there is no way of knowing exactly how the music is played. This is where the Karaoke player comes in, we can overcome this problem by singing along with the sound of a Practice Chanter. I find this is a great aid in learning Canntaireachd and is the tool I have used here to present it.

The sound of each syllable is a personal one. Most people reading this will not necessarily be native Gaelic speakers, so some of the sounds may seem strange. It is quite alright to read the syllables in a way that is comfortable for the singer. Piping authorities are not consistent when explaining the pronunciation and some syllables are definitely not as a Gaelic speaker would automatically see them. Most people generally agree on the vowel sounds, they are as in Gaelic but it is the sound of the gracenotes where there is some confusion. The main vowels are: A is an ah sound, E is a long a sound as in play, I is an ee sound, O is a long oh as in English.

The tune we are learning to sing on this page was written a little after the end of the Golden Age by Archibald Munro. He was the Piper for Alastair MacDonnell, 15th Chief of Glengarry. Alastair was a character who was trying to keep the old traditions alive after the period of the Disarming Act but died following an accident at sea off the coast of Scotland in 1828. Even though it is a late composition, it is ideal for a novice as it does not contain very difficult execution in the Urlar or main theme. It is a primary tune and is pentatonic in A, (only five different notes).

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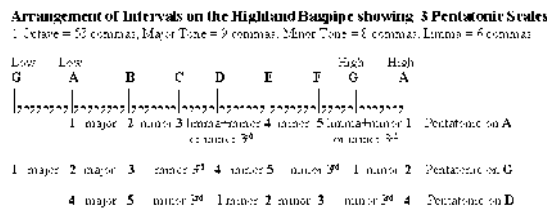
**Pentatonic modes**

The Highland Bagpipe is absolutely unique in the world of musical instruments. It was designed to play three different pentatonic scales.

The octave can be divided into 53 commas. There is a rule that says that the Gaps in a Pentatonic or Gapped Scale have to be a Minor Third or 14 commas. The Bagpipe achieves this by combining a Minor Tone with a Limma.

As a matter of interest a Limma is an interval which is 1 Comma larger than a Semi-tone which is 5 Commas.

The Highland chanter can be described as looking like this:



Most of the tones in each scale are minor tones except 1 major tone.

The A scale has major tone between 1 and 2

The G scale has a major tone between 2 and 3, also a minor tone at the upper end, and between 1 and 2 at the lower end.

The D scale has a major tone between 4 and 5, (this is the Amazing grace Scale, check it out).

All the other tones are minor. This, along with a different interval between the key note and the drone accompaniment for each mode, is what gives each scale its own character.

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## Pronunciation

### The basic notes of the Chanter

From now on I am going to refer to the notes of the Chanter as a modern day Piper knows them as well as by the Tonic sol fah syllables.

The sounds used for the basic notes without any gracenotes are as follows:

High A or Doh - **I** which sounds like ee in see.

G or Tee - **DI** pronounced jee, this one is easy to remember.

That is how a Gael would see the syllable but it is quite alright to sing it as Dee

F or La - **VE** sounds like vay , [Return](#)

E or Soh - **E** also sounds like ay in day, [Return](#)

D or Fah - **A** sounds like the a in father,

C or Me - **O**, This is the same as o in open, [Return](#)

B or Rah - **O**, This is also the same as o in open, don't worry about it being the same as C, there is not usually a problem.

Low A or Doh - **EN**, as en in hen. [Return](#)

Low G or Tee - **EM**, the same as em in emigrate.

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## The notes with a G gracenote added

Adding a G gracenote changes the sound and distinguishes those notes that are the same when plain. If you only memorize one set of notes, this should be the one. It is the most used form for melody notes in Piping.

G or Tee- **HI** pronounced hee, this is with a High A gracenote. (I have written this with a upper case I, not to be confused with Hi)

F or La - **HE** sounds like hay,

E or Soh - **CHE** sounds like chay [Return](#)

D or Fah - **HA** sounds like hah.

C or Me - **HO**, This is the same as ho ho ho in laughter except the o portion is held for the duration of the note. [Return](#)

B or Rah - **HIO**, This sounds like heeyo. [Return](#)

Low A or Doh - **HIN**, as in hinder, the n sound being extended till the end of the note.

Low G or Tee - **HIM**, the same as the masculine him, the m sound being extended till the end of the note.

**Hi** - pronounced hee, (I have written this with an lower case i, not to be confused with HI) This is a special case for another way of singing G gracenote on E, that occur in cadences and introductory themal gracenotes. These occur fairly often and appear to be a high A gracenote on high G which is not so common. The note following it in the Cadence usually gets a D gracenote on it but instead of D as below they always use an H as if it were a G Gracenote. [Return](#)

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## The notes with an E gracenote added

Adding a E gracenote changes the sound again.

D or Fah - **EA** sounds like yah.

C or Me - **EO**, sounds like yoh.

B or Rah - **EO**, also sounds yoh.

Low A or Doh - **EN**, as it looks

Low G or Tee - **EM**, as it looks

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## The notes with a D gracenote added

Adding a D gracenote changes the sound yet again.

C or Me - **DO**, This is the same as doh in Sol fa.

B or Rah - **TO**, This sounds like toe.

Low A or Doh - **DAN**, as in Daniel

Low G or Tee - **DAM**, as it looks. (not a swear word)

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## The Notes with Throws in front.

B or Rah Throw, - **TRO** pronounced with a long o as in bow

C or Me Throw, - **DRO** also with a long o. [Return](#)

D or Fah Throw, - **TRA** sounds like Trah. [Return](#)

E or Soh Throw, - **DRE** sounds like Dray

F or Lah Throw, - **DARE** sounds like Darray

High G or Tee Throw, - **DARI** sounds like Darree

**Note: In all these Throws, give the R a good Scots roll.**

## Low G Gracenote

Heavy low G gracenote on Low A or Low Tee - **DIN**, This is a special grace note on low G which occurs before Low A in many cadences and sometimes on it's own, usually at the end of a phrase. The low G gracenote is heavier or thicker than usual so the D part of it should be quite big, the I very small and the N being sustained to the end of the Low A or Doh. [Return](#)

## Double Echos

The Double Echo is a movement which can occur on most notes except High A or High Doh and C or Me. When it occurs on B or Rah it is preceded with a Themal E grace note, Hi; similarly on Low A or Doh except that this movement has developed into a different sound than any of the others. Here they are:

High G or Tee, - **HIRIRI** sounds Hiree - er - ree.

F or Lah, - **HERERE** sounds Haray - ar - ray.

E or Soh, - **CHEREDE** sounds Cheray - jee - ay.

D or Fah, - **HiHARARA** sounds Hee - Harah - arah.

B or Rah, - **HiHORODO** sounds Hee - Horow - dun - o.

Low A or Doh, - **HiHARIN** this may be an abbreviation, sounds Hee - a - hararin.

## Piobaireachd Variations

After the Ground and possibly it's Doubling and sometimes a Trebling, there usually occurs a series of stereotype variations. There are several different ways to produce a variation but the main idea is to extract the main melody notes from the ground, accent it with a G gracenote and follow each with a beat which can be a single short note to a string of gracenote which form a type of arpeggio, rather like the vamping or strumming of a Guitar or Harp. Sometimes the beat occurs before the melody notes. Cadences can be inserted at various places to reflect similar positions in the Ground and usually when this occurs there is a Doubling of each variation when the cadences are replaced by the appropriate melody note and beat. Not all possible types of variation are used in a particular tune but some tunes use more than others. Some types of variation are used together like a family but they always get progressively more difficult or complicated as the tune approaches its end.

The following is an explanation of the various beats:

### The Dithis Variation Singling - pronounced Jeeish

This is where a very short note follows each themal note, usually it is a Low A or Doh but sometimes it can be a Low G or Low Tee. In the Doubling that changes to a repeat of the melody note, so instead of a Low A or Doh you get a reiteration of the same melody note played very short, almost like an echo. In the singling cadences can occur which are removed in the doubling.

Low G or Tee - **HIMEN**, - this is a G gracenote on a long Low G or Tee melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an E gracenote.

Low A or Doh - **HINEN**, - this is a G gracenote on a long Low A or Doh melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an E gracenote..

B or Rah - **HIOEN**, - this is a G gracenote on a long B or Rah melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an E gracenote.

C or Me - **HOEN**, - this is a G gracenote on a long C or Me melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an E gracenote.

D or Fah - **HAEN**, - this is a G gracenote on a long D or Fah melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an E gracenote..

E or Soh - **CHEHIN**, - this is a G gracenote on a E or Soh melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an G gracenote as an E gracenote cannot be played on E or any note higher.

F or Lah - **HEHIN**, - this is a G gracenote on a F or Lah melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an G gracenote.

High G or Tee - **HIHIN**, - this is a High A gracenote on a long High G or Tee melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an G gracenote.

High A or Doh **IEN**, - this is a long High A or Doh melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh with no accent.

When the Beat note is Low G or Tee, **EM** is substituted for **EN** and **HIM** for **HIN**.

### The Dithis Variation Doubling

Low G or Tee - **HIMEM**, - this is a G gracenote on a long Low G or Tee melody note followed by a quick Low G accented with an E gracenote.

Low A or Doh - **HINEN**, - this is a G gracenote on a long Low A or Doh melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an E gracenote..

B or Rah - **HIOEO**, - this is a G gracenote on a long B or Rah melody note followed by a quick B accented with an E gracenote, pronounced Heeoyo.

C or Me - **HOEO**, - this is a G gracenote on a long C or Me melody note followed by a quick C accented with an E gracenote, pronounced Hoyeeo.

D or Fah - **HAEA**, - this is a G gracenote on a long D or Fah melody note followed by a quick D accented with an E gracenote pronounced Hahyah.

E or Soh - **CHECHE**, - this is a G gracenote on a E or Soh melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an G gracenote as an E gracenote cannot be played on E or any note higher.

F or Lah - **HEHE**, - this is a G gracenote on a F or Lah melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an G gracenote.

High G or Tee - **HICHI**, - this is a High A gracenote on a long High G or Tee melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh accented with an G gracenote.

High A or Doh **IDI**, - this is a long High A or Doh melody note followed by a quick Low A or Doh with no accent.

*To be continued*

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## Benefits of Chanting

The benefits derived from chanting are well known in many cultures from Tibetan Monks to North American Natives. Music of repetitive nature can relax the nerves of the chanter and invoke a strong emotional reaction of a wide range, from Serenity to Ecstasy or an outlet for anger to a show of love.

In his book CHANTING, Discovering Spirit in Sound, (ISBN 0-7679-0323-4) Robert Gass describes the benefits of chanting to Spiritual, Mental and Physical health.

If you have learned to sing the Canntaireachd to Glengarry's Lament please go to this page to practice your singing of it. The background sound is of a Drone accompaniment, typical of the Great Highland Bagpipe. Sing along with the words on the screen and relish the view

of the Dark Island Castle, deep in MacDonnell territory. Click on the following tune name and have a truly mesmerizing experience.

### [Glengarry's Lament](#)

If the drone sound does not play within a minute, click on the file name at the top of the screen. If you don't wish to hear the drones just click on your STOP button. If you wish to start them again after stopping them, click on your REFRESH button. The pitch of the drone sound is that of Doh, the first note of the tune is Hi or Soh. Sing the main notes nice and slowly, making sure they harmonize with the drones. You will get the most benefit from your experience this way.

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## Hereditary Pipers

In mediaeval times up to the late 18th century it was the custom in the Highlands for a Clan leader to employ a Piper as part of their retinue of servants. This was very often a hereditary post, passed on from father to son. One of the most famous of the Hereditary Piping families were the MacCrimmons, who were Pipers to the Clan MacCleod on the Isle of Skye. This family is credited with the establishment of a college of piping at Boreraig, where pipers from all over the Highlands would go for tuition in the art of Ceol Mor, the classical music of the Great Highland Bagpipe. Other notable families were the MacArthurs who were pipers to the Chief of the Clan MacDonald of Sleat who also established a college after learning the art from the MacCrimmons. The MacIntyers were Pipers to the chief of Clan Menzies. The Rankines, pipers to the MacCleans of Coll. The MacKenzies of Gairloch used a family of MacKays the MacLeods of Raassay employed Pipers from MacKays of Raassay. One of the last pipers to attend the MacCrimmon college was David Fraser who was sent there by Simon Fraser, Lord Fraser of Lovat in 1743 to be trained by Malcom MacCrimmon in the art.

This class of professionals more or less died out during the period of the disarming act following the 1745 uprising, except for the very rich nobility and Royalty, who still engaged a personal piper well into the 20th century. Some notable examples being Angus MacKay and William Ross who were Pipers for Queen Victoria but these were appointments rather than hereditary positions as had been the case in the Golden Age of Piping.