



LEARN THE BAGPIPE

Tutor 1

Beginners

College of Piping

THE COLLEGE OF PIPING HIGHLAND BAGPIPE

TUTOR 1

From the original by Seumas MacNeill and Thomas Pearston
Revised and edited by Robert Wallace

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FOREWORD

THE COLLEGE OF PIPING'S Tutor 1 is the most successful book ever written on Scotland's national instrument. To date sales of the affectionately known 'green tutor' have exceeded 420,000. Its popularity is a credit to the original authors, Seumas MacNeill and Thomas Pearston. Their knowledge of the instrument, and ability to explain its technique in a straightforward but progressive manner, ensured the book's success. When it was launched in 1953 it quickly became a boon for would-be pipers the world over. Thousands started, and continue to start, their careers in piping on page one of this book.

The tutor is structured so that the student piper can learn one lesson a week, making a complete course of just over six months. It has been done in less time and it has been done in more, but the important thing is to learn the exercises and tunes carefully and accurately. This book explains as simply as is possible all of the required first movements. You should use it in conjunction with the audio and video files.

The central thrust of the tutor is excellence in rudimentary fingering. I cannot emphasise enough how important good technique is in the production of satisfactory pipe music. Much as a sculptor cannot create great art with a dull chisel, neither will a piper with poor finger technique produce good music. Consequently, I have included some practice scales on the last few pages of the tutor. They are a summary of the movements learned in each lesson. I would strongly urge all students who have completed the tutor to set aside as much time as possible each day to run through these exercises. Teachers may like to note that worksheets to accompany Tutor 1 are also available on the CDROM and from the College. These have proved of great assistance in the classroom.
















It is now more than 50 years since the original College of Piping Tutor 1 was published. I am confident that through this revised edition it will continue to commend itself to learner pipers and their instructors for many years to come.

**Robert Wallace,
Principal**

'To the make of a piper go seven years.... At the end of his seven years one born to it will stand at the start of knowledge, and leaning a fond ear to the drone he may have parley with old folks of old affairs. Playing the tune of the Fairy Harp, he can hear his forefolk, plaided in skins, towsy-headed and terrible, grunting at the oars and snoring in the caves, he has his own whittle and club in The Desperate Battle (my own tune, my darling), where the white-haired sea-rovers are on the shore, and a stain's on the edge of the tide; or, trying his art on Laments, he can stand by the cairn of kings, ken the colour of Fingal's hair, and see the moon-glint on the hook of the Druids.'

Neil Munro

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HISTORY OF THE BAGPIPE

THE BAGPIPE has a long and honourable history stretching back to the dawning of civilisation, for it is one of the oldest of instruments played by man from the earliest times.

It may have its beginnings in ancient Egypt where a simple chanter and drone were played together. These were later attached to a bag made of skin and fitted with a blowpipe making a primitive form of the instrument as we have it today. This kind of bagpipe was played by the Greeks and the Romans, and eventually spread throughout Europe.

It continued to be popular through the centuries and during the Middle Ages, still in its simple form, was one of the most common instruments in the countries of southern, central and western Europe. It was one of the favourite instruments of the shepherds and wandering minstrels who provided much of the music then played.

In more modern times many forms of the bagpipe, some with a wide range of notes and some blown by a bellows held under the arm, were developed in Europe and remained popular until the 19th century. But as towns and cities sprang up and more people ceased to live in villages and make merry in the open air, music became an indoor activity and elaborate instruments of modern times, such as the accordion, grew in popularity. With their coming, the bagpipe died out over much of Europe, though it still survived in places such as Brittany, Southern Italy, and the Balkans, where the original simple form has been little changed. In Britain, its history and fate, except in the Highlands of Scotland, followed the same pattern as on the European mainland. It flourished for centuries as the instrument of the common people. It was played at fairs, weddings, open-air dances, pageants and all sorts of processions and merry-makings. It is mentioned and described in books of all kinds, from the plays of Shakespeare to country ballads, and pictures and carvings of it are numerous. Forms of it became popular in Northumbria, Ireland and Southern Scotland. In all other parts of the country it disappeared about the beginning of the eighteenth century.

In the Highlands of Scotland, however, its history was different. Its martial music appealed to the warlike spirit of the people and the fact that the Highlands were not 'urbanised' meant there were more open spaces and opportunities for playing out of doors. The original form with bag, chanter, blowpipe and one drone remained unaltered until the addition of a second tenor and a bass drone became the norm. The bagpipe fitted into the clan system then operating in the Highlands, the chiefs of the clans having their own pipers, in many cases a hereditary office. Colleges, of which there were several, were set up for the teaching of bagpipe playing. In these colleges developed 'ceol mor' (great music) or 'piobaireachd', the classical music of the bagpipe, music which stands comparison with the greatest compositions in the world of music.

The most famous of these colleges was that of the MacCrimmons at Borreraig, in Skye. They were the hereditary pipers to the MacLeods of Dunvegan, and flourished for over 200 years, training pipers from all over the Highlands and composing many masterpieces of ceol mor, many of which we still have.

After the Jacobite Rising of 1745 the playing of the bagpipe was discouraged by the

authorities who deemed it a weapon of war. The colleges broke up and the hereditary families of pipers scattered. At this time, and for many years afterwards, there was grave danger that the fate of the bagpipe, here as elsewhere, would begin to decline and disappear. Fortunately its playing was allowed again before the art of doing so had been forgotten. At this time, too, thankfully, pipers started writing down ceol mor. Previously it had been passed on orally but now there are several hundred pieces published in staff notation.

Highland Societies were set up in London, Edinburgh and elsewhere and they started bagpipe competitions. The pipes also became the favourite music of Scottish soldiers who, in increasing numbers, were being enrolled in the British Army. All of this helped the pipes' revival and spread their popularity, so that survival was made certain. They have become more and more popular, and today they are known and played throughout the world.

The person who sets out to be a piper should take pride in the fact that it is a noble instrument, with great traditions. It is capable of playing great music, and much great music has been composed for it. It is worthy of the learner's best efforts.

PRELIMINARY NOTES

THE EQUIPMENT you require to begin learning the art of the the great Highland bagpipe consists of this book, a practice chanter and a manuscript music book. You will find that by far the quickest way to learn to read music is to write down each tune as you learn it, and by the time you have copied ten tunes you will understand staff notation very well.

You also require seven fingers, two thumbs and an interest in the bagpipes. Of all the requisites the last named is the most important. Enthusiasm can make up for a lot, and the beginner who is prepared to practise regularly, often, and slowly, will inevitably become a competent player.

Regular periods of practice are absolutely essential, and you should set aside at least one hour each day for careful playing of the fundamental movements on the chanter. The chanter should be held firmly but not tightly. Fingers should be moved with precision but should never be in a state of tension. By frequent reference to the videos, photographs and diagrams in the tutor, you can make sure that your hands maintain at all times the classical positions.

When you first begin to play the practice chanter rest the sole on your thigh so that the weight of the chanter is not borne by the hands. When you have become more proficient you can support the chanter with the lips and fingers only and thus simulate playing the bagpipe more closely. It is important from the beginning to place the mouthpiece in the middle of the lips, and try not to puff out the cheeks.

We cannot over-emphasise the importance of practising slowly. In each lesson only sufficient finger movements are taught to enable the next part of a tune to be learned, and thus you may progress very rapidly while at the same time building a firm foundation – provided that you practise. If you make an error in a tune or a scale start again from the note before the mistake. There's no need to go over the part you played satisfactorily.

THE PRACTICE CHANTER

A PRACTICE chanter should be bought from a recognised bagpipe firm, or dealer, who has a tradition to uphold. A new practice chanter purchased from these well known suppliers – such as the College of Piping shop – has the name of the manufacturer stamped on it, usually at the top of the bottom section.

Chanters which have no name are to be treated with caution. Many sold in general music dealers' shops are made of boxwood or similar cheap material and are to be avoided. They are very much lighter in weight than polypenco, ebony or African blackwood chanters, and if one looks through the bore one usually finds a ragged finish. In addition, when a reed is tried, it is often out of tune, producing a scale that is unevenly balanced. There are now perfectly satisfactory plastic chanters available. Fancy ornamental or ivory parts have no influence whatever on the tone. There is nothing wrong with buying a good second hand chanter provided it bears the name of a reputable maker and has no cracks or flaws. Before using, wash thoroughly with soap and warm water and buy a new reed.

HALF-SIZE PRACTICE CHANTER

Children aged six to nine will benefit from fingering the half - sized chanter. Thereafter is best to go straight to the full-sized model. It is astonishing how quickly small hands adapt to it. It is a help, sometimes, to purchase a shorter top for the chanter. Some makers have developed a type of practice chanter with holes which simulate the larger finger holes of the full bagpipe chanter thus giving the learner the chance of playing as if on the bagpipe. The holes are counter-sunk, the outside diameter being almost the same as the pipe chanter, and the inside diameter the same as the ordinary practice chanter. This type of practice chanter can be an asset for the beginner.

CLEANING

Use soap and warm water with a little mild disinfectant to clean the chanter. Use a long thin bristle brush for the top and a broader one for the bottom. Dirt frequently lodges just inside the edges of the holes, especially the smaller ones at the top. This can be removed by cleaning first with a darning needle or similar object, and then with the brush. Dry the outside with a piece of old towelling and leave the chanter to dry fully in a warm room.

RE-HEMPING

The thicker yellow hemp well waxed with cobbler's wax or beeswax is recommended for the chanter. The chanter top should not fit too tightly, just firmly enough to prevent the escape of any air. The practice chanter usually requires more frequent re-hemping than any part of the bagpipe as continual wetting and drying causes the hemp to rot more readily. The hemp should be applied evenly. Check frequently if you have used too much or too little by regularly replacing the chanter top. Once you have achieved a firm fit, finish hemping with a couple of half hitches and trim the end. After every practice, dry the reed and chanter.

THE REED

Two types of reeds can be purchased – plastic and cane. Plastic is by far the more popular nowadays. Some types of plastic reeds are very easy to blow and are specially recommended for beginners. The slightest flow of air sets the reed going and gives the novice a chance to concentrate on fingering.

A plastic reed requires no 'blowing in' and will last much longer than cane. A new cane reed will become harder to blow as moisture penetrates the cane. A plastic or a cane reed will be difficult to blow if the blades are curved apart so that the mouth of it looks like this: (). The less the curve at the mouth will generally mean the reed will be easy to blow or 'weak'. A cane reed which has thick blades will also be hard to blow.

Several methods may be used to weaken and sharpen a strong reed. An elastic band wrapped round the blades is the most popular. The extra pressure on the blades will bring them together and give the desired effect. Repeated pressing together at the bottom of the blades is also helpful. Another way of sharpening the pitch of the chanter is to remove some hemp and sink the reed further into its seat. To flatten a reed, gently squeeze the blades at the sides and/or raise the reed in its seat by applying a little more hemp.

When removing a reed from the chanter, grip it on the lower part, the staple. Be very careful when re-assembling the chanter. Make sure the reed is straight and you do not catch the corner of the blades with the chanter top. To dry the reed, hold it by its staple (the metal part) and blow excess moisture out from the bottom. Carefully dry each blade on a tissue. To completely dry the reed, leave it in a safe place in a warm room for a short time.

BUYING A REED

Before purchasing a reed make sure that the blades are evenly bound together with no overlapping. Each side of the reed should be completely symmetrical. Lack of symmetry is the fault of the reed maker and cannot be rectified.

To choose a good reed the following test should be made: place the reed in your mouth and blow gently. A sound will be heard which will be roughly in unison with low A on the practice chanter. When given a slightly stronger blow, a second sound is heard which is higher than the first and corresponds approximately to the note E of the practice chanter.

Pick a reed which is fairly easy to blow and does not squeal from high A to low A and low G when tried in the chanter. Remember to take your own chanter for the test.

DISMANTLING THE CHANTER

Very great care must be taken in doing this otherwise the reed may be damaged. The lower half of the chanter is gripped just above the high A hole, and the top is held by the other hand at the ferrule (usually a metal band at the bottom of the chanter top). Both hands now being close together, the two portions are drawn apart with a screwing motion; care should be taken that the top does not scrape the corners of the reed. Assembling the parts is done in a similar fashion. When removing the reed, always grip the staple and do not touch the blades.

CARRYING

A convenient way to carry the chanter is to place the reed inside the chanter top, staple first, and plug with a cork or with paper. Top and bottom portions can now be transported without much fear of mishap.

LESSON 1

THE NAMES OF THE NOTES

The pipe chanter has nine notes. They are called (reading from the lowest note upwards,) low G, low A, then B, C, D, E, F, high G, and high A.

A framework consisting of five parallel straight lines (called 'the staff') is used for writing music. Each line and space represents a different note, and the notes of the chanter are represented as follows:



As you see, the seven letters of the alphabet, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, are used for the names of these notes. Since we have two Gs and two As they have to be distinguished by 'low' and 'high'.

THE NAMES OF THE FINGERS

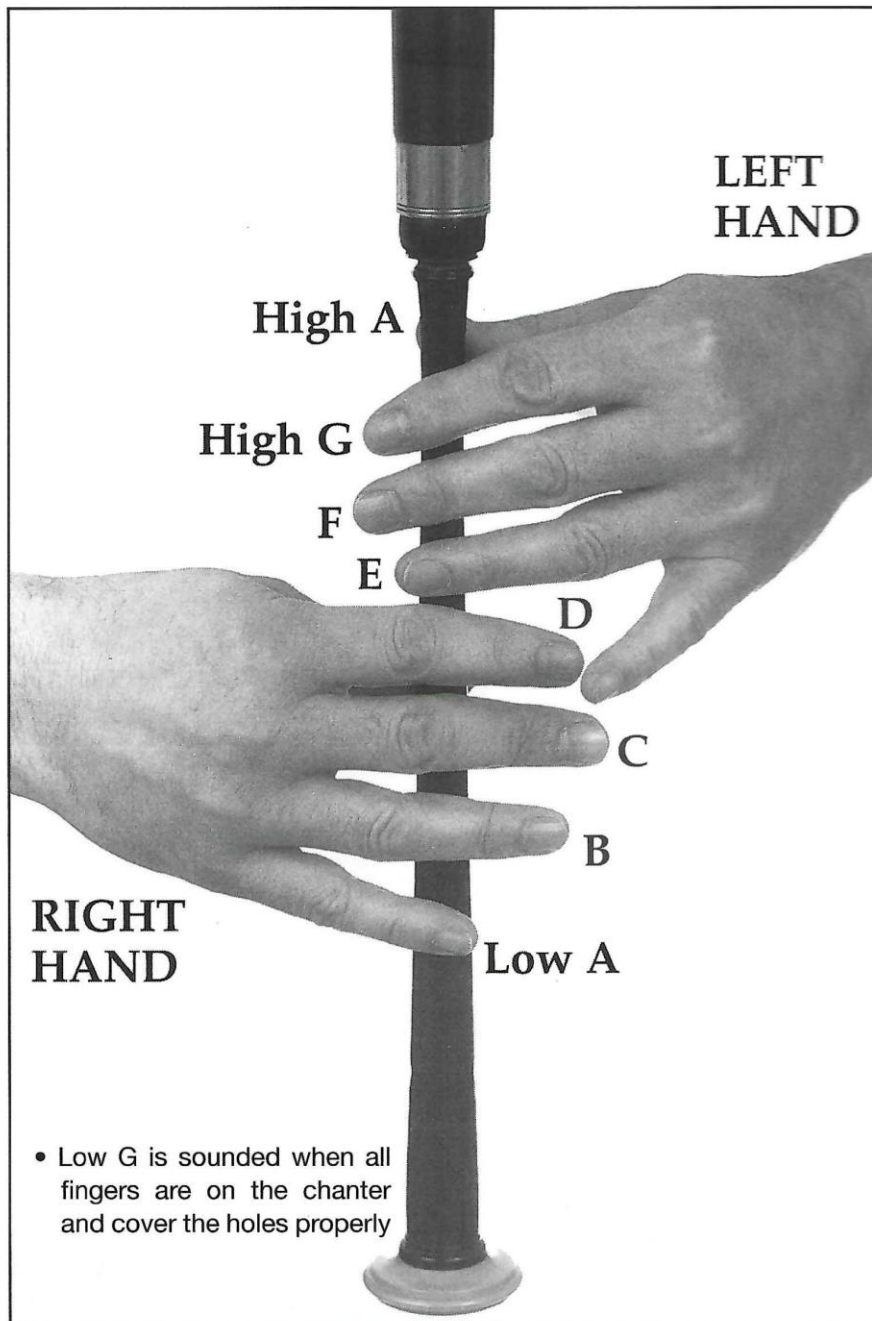
The eight holes of the chanter are covered by the thumb and first three fingers of the top hand, and by the four fingers of the bottom hand.

It is now conventional to play with the left hand above the right, but there are always some players who find it easier to play with the right hand on top, and this is perfectly acceptable.

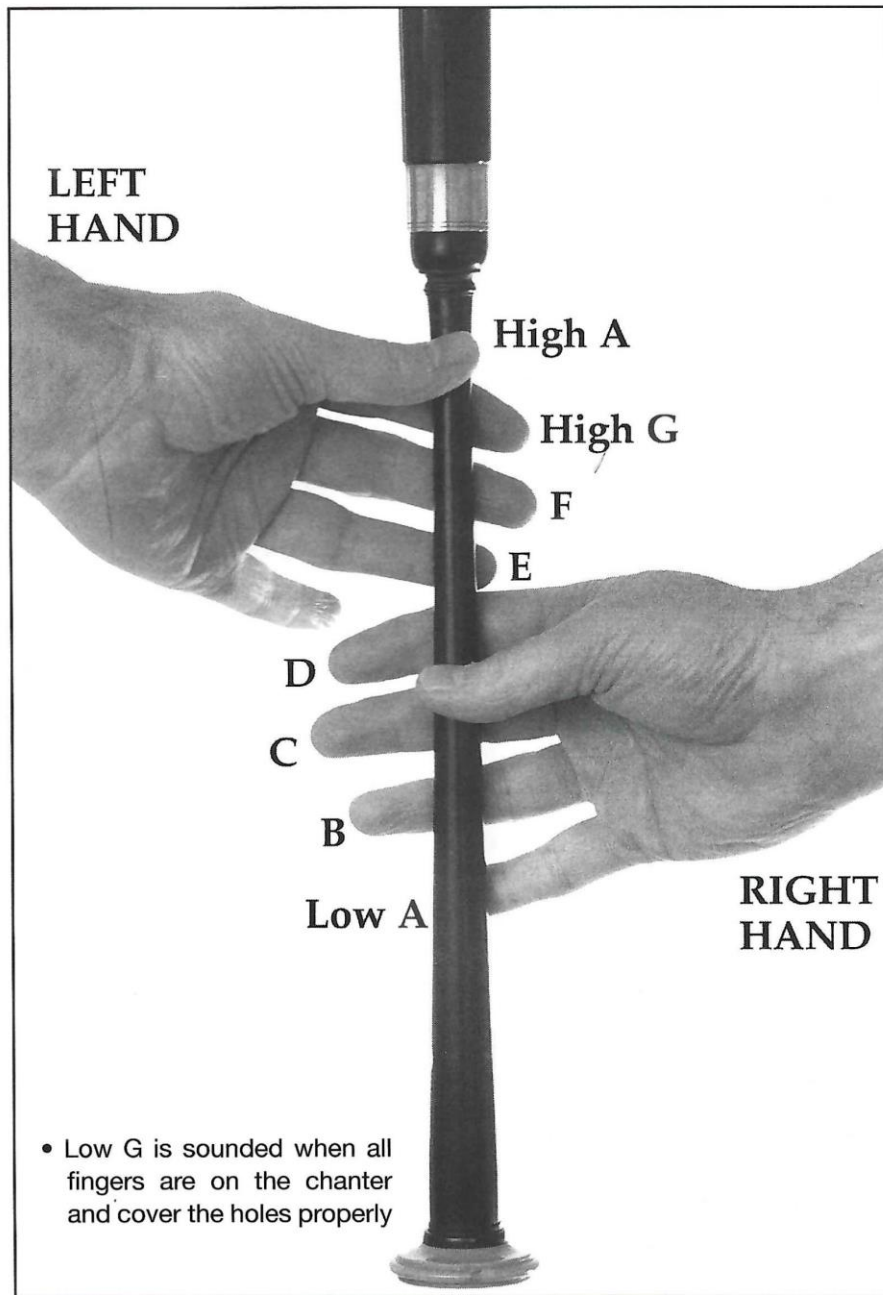
Each finger is called by the name of a note. The way of placing your fingers and the names given to them are given in the photograph opposite.

Memorise the names of the notes and the names of the fingers.

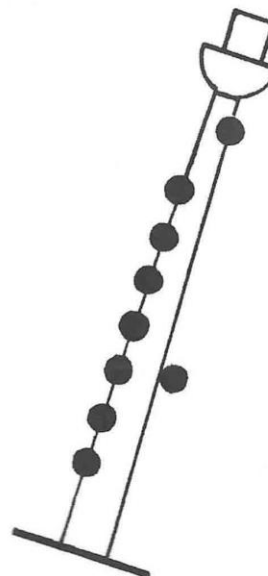
FINGER POSITIONS – FRONT VIEW



FINGER POSITIONS – REAR VIEW



THE FIRST NOTE – LOW G



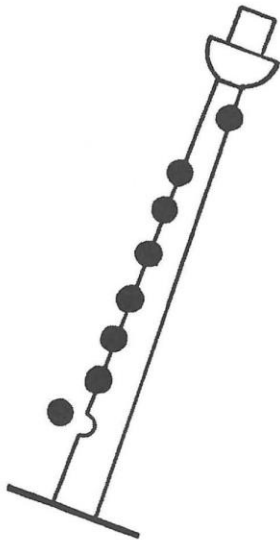
The first note you must learn to play is low G. Place all fingers on the chanter as shown.

Note very carefully the following points:

- 1 Your fingers must be perfectly straight, even when off the chanter, and must hold the chanter quite firmly but not tightly.
- 2 The holes are covered by the middle sections of the B, C, and D, fingers and by the end sections of the other fingers.
- 3 The two fingers not used for playing (if the left hand is the top hand) are: the little finger of the left hand (which is always kept relaxed), and the thumb of the right hand, which is placed approximately opposite the D and C fingers (see opposite page). This will cause a little discomfort in the right wrist at first but if you persevere it will soon feel quite natural.

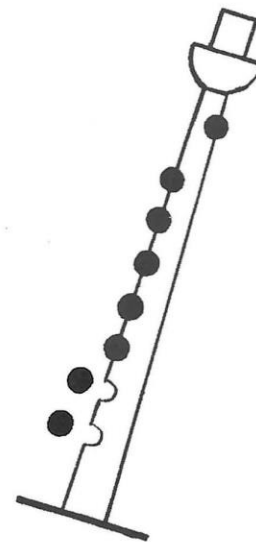
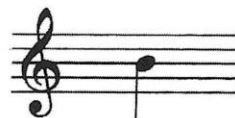
Begin by placing each finger in turn carefully on the chanter and then ask someone to compare the final result with the photographs and diagrams, or you may examine the position of your fingers with a mirror. After any corrections have been made, blow the chanter, and if your fingers are covering the holes properly, a low steady note will be heard. More likely, however, a high or wavering note will come out, which means that some of the air is escaping at one or more of the holes because your fingers are not properly covering them. Continue alternately blowing and adjusting your fingers until the low steady note is heard. This is the first important step in piping. Practise until you can be sure of playing low G every time you want to.

THE SECOND NOTE - LOW A



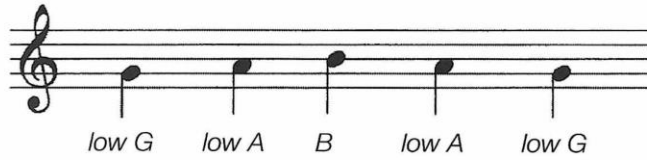
The second note is made very easily once you have mastered low G. To make low A, you simply lift your little finger, so that your hands are in the position shown above. Remember to keep the little finger straight even when it is off the chanter. When you are sure you can play low G and low A try:

THE THIRD NOTE - B



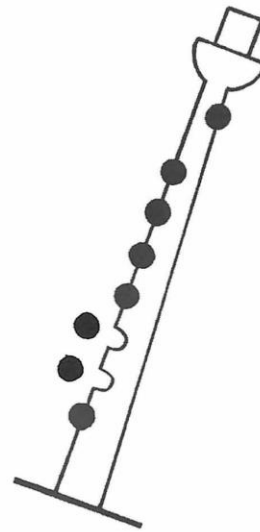
This one, as you can see, is also very easy. You only have to play low A and then lift the B finger off the chanter and you find you are playing B. Be sure that the little finger and B finger are straight and about the same distance from the chanter. Practise now playing low G, low A, B, low A, low G.

This is written:



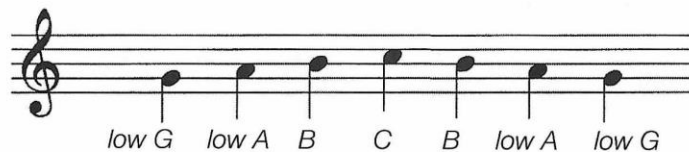
Practise this many times until you are sure you are playing each note correctly.

THE FOURTH NOTE - C



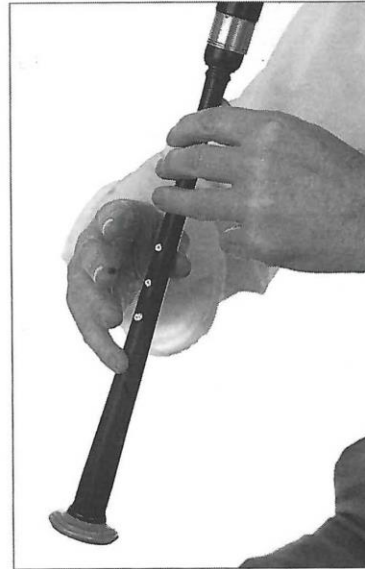
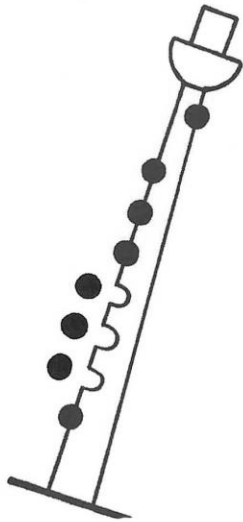
To play C, lift the B finger and C finger off the chanter, BUT KEEP THE LITTLE FINGER ON. Make sure that the two raised fingers are straight and at the same level. Try now to play up the scale from low G to C. As you go from B to C be careful to replace the little finger. When you go from C to B raise the little finger at the same time as you replace the C finger. It is very important to move the little finger and the C finger AT THE SAME TIME.

Play now:



The note C is played with the little finger on the chanter. Some players are erroneously instructed to play an open C (little finger off). This note can sound out of tune on the modern pipe chanter.

THE FIFTH NOTE - D



D again is an easy one. The D, C and B fingers are raised, all other fingers being kept on. Be careful to keep these raised fingers straight and at the same distance from the chanter.

Play now:

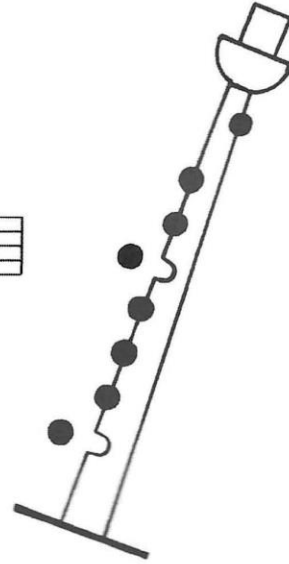


and also



Can you name, correctly, these notes?

THE SIXTH NOTE - E



For this note we cross over to the left or top hand. Only the E and low A fingers are off the chanter, as you can see from the picture and the diagram. Place your fingers in the position for D, then raise the E and low A fingers and drop the three raised fingers (that is the D, C and B ones) on to the chanter **AT THE SAME TIME**. The three fingers going down must pass the two coming up like a pair of scissors crossing. Do the movement first without blowing until you feel that you know what to do, then try and blow from the time you sound D.

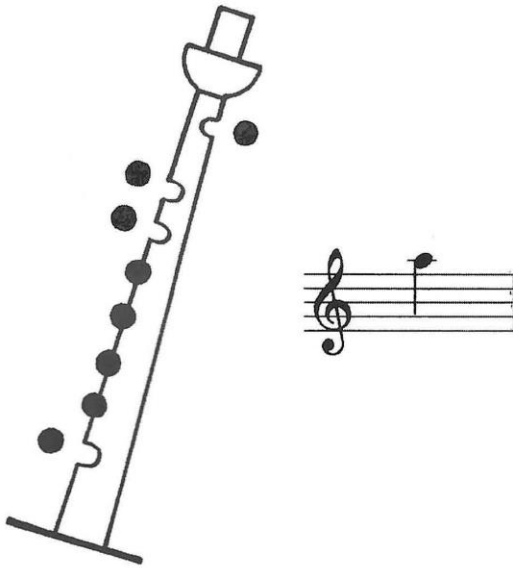
If you make the mistake of putting down the three fingers more quickly than you lift the two others, you will hear a little low G coming out between D and E. This is called a 'crossing noise' and must be avoided by careful practice. Only two notes must be heard: D and E. You must not sound a little low G between them.



Play this very slowly, and listen carefully for crossing noises.

A crossing noise may also occur when you are playing from E back to D. This is caused by the E and low A fingers being put back on too quickly. When playing the practice chanter you will take frequent breaths, **BUT NEVER TAKE A BREATH AT A CROSSING**, that is, when changing from D, C, or B to a top hand note, or from a top hand note to D, C, or B. Always take the breath before or after, otherwise you may fail to detect a crossing noise simply because you are not blowing when it is made.

THE NINTH NOTE – HIGH A



When playing high A, the low A, F, high G and high A fingers are off the chanter. This means that if you go from high G to high A you must lift off your top hand thumb and replace the E finger **AT THE SAME TIME**. You will notice that high A is written above the staff on what is known as a ledger line.

Practise slowly:



Make sure that as the thumb goes on for high G the E finger comes off.

You are now able to play all the notes on the chanter. Starting from low G, play slowly all the notes up to high A, and then play down to low G again.

Take care to form each note correctly, with all fingers straight and not too far from the chanter when raised (about 2.5 to 3 centimetres is ideal). Listen carefully when changing from D to E and E to D to ensure that you are not making crossing noises.

Write each note of the chanter scale in your manuscript book. Try to do it without having to refer to any pages here. If necessary, write the names of the notes below them in order to help you to memorise them.

Well, that is the end of the first lesson. You should now continue to practise playing slowly up and down the scale taking care to form each note correctly, listening carefully for crossing noises. When you are confident of this part and have memorised the names of the notes and their positions on the staff, you are ready to pass on to Lesson 2.

LESSON 2 ♣

GRACENOTES

If you listen to a song being sung, or a tune being played on the violin or piano, you will notice that considerable effect is attained by varying the loudness of different notes and so emphasising them. It is impossible to do this when playing a tune on the practice chanter or bagpipe.

We can, however, emphasise a note in piping by playing a very short note in front of it. This short note is called a 'gracenote'. (Ask any piper to play a simple tune, and then play it again without gracenotes, and you will hear immediately how lifeless and monotonous is the second rendering).

Gracenotes are also used to separate two of the same note when played one after the other. If you were asked to play two low Gs you would probably blow a low G, then take a breath and blow another low G. This is the method used for separating notes in some instruments.

When playing the bagpipe, the flow of air to the reeds is continuous, so we use a gracenote instead. Gracenotes are produced in many ways, but mainly by using the G, D, and E fingers.

To do this, begin by playing low G. Then lift the high G finger off the chanter and replace it smartly. Do the same with the D finger only, then with the E finger only.

The G gracenote is written:



As you see, the head or blob of the note is in the high G space, but to show that it is a gracenote and not a full note, the tail is turned upwards and it is much smaller.

In the same way:



represents a D gracenote

and:



an E gracenote.

The full scales for each gracenote are on p62 and with the rest of your technique should form part of your daily practice routine.

The three strokes on the tail indicate that the note is of short duration. We will deal with duration of notes later, but at present it is sufficient to know that the more strokes a note has, the shorter it is to be played.

Two low Gs separated by a G gracenote would be written:



and the three gracenotes on low G are written as:



Usually we make the first gracenote as we start to blow. Try this a few times and you will find it quite simple – move the G finger for the short gracenote and blow at the same time. This means that we miss out the first of the four low Gs shown above.

Practise now:



Gracenotes, of course, are not done only on low G, so now try the G, D, and E gracenotes (in that order) on low A.

That is:



and also on B:



and also on C:



Practise these slowly many times.

Remember that the time taken in playing a gracenote must always be much less than the time you give to the note itself, even when you are playing slowly. Gracenotes, therefore, can never overlap one another.

So ends the second lesson. You can now go back and practise these two lessons until you can play them correctly, though slowly, and then you will be ready to proceed.

LESSON 3

CHANGE OF NOTE WITH A GRACENOTE

The next thing you must learn to do is to play a gracenote as you change from one note to another. This is the gracenote used for emphasis, and occurs very, very, often in pipe music.

Firstly we'll try the movement which is written:



This is a low G followed by a low A, with a G gracenote between. To do this, you sound low G, then lift the high G finger to make the gracenote, and, AS IT IS FALLING raise the little finger to sound low A. These photographs show what is required:



1 The start of the movement; low G being played



2 The high G finger raised to make the gracenote



3 The little finger raised and the high G finger back on the chanter to form low A

Practise this first without blowing until you know what is to be done. The sound you should hear consists of two notes, low G and low A, with the chirping sound of the gracenote on low A. The common mistake is to move the little finger before the high G finger producing an extra low A.

This would be written:



Make sure that the first finger to move is the high G finger.

When you think you can do the change with a gracenote, try changing from B to low A with a G gracenote. Just as before, you sound B, then raise the high G finger alone to sound the gracenote, and as it is falling put the B finger on the chanter to sound low A.

Practise slowly and carefully:



All these changes of a note with a gracenote are performed in much the same way. You sound the first note, then lift the gracenote finger and, as it is falling, change your fingers into the position for the second note.

Of course the actual time the gracenote finger is off the chanter is longer than it should be at this stage but practise slowly to begin with and speed will develop as you go along.

We shall consider only one further example at present:



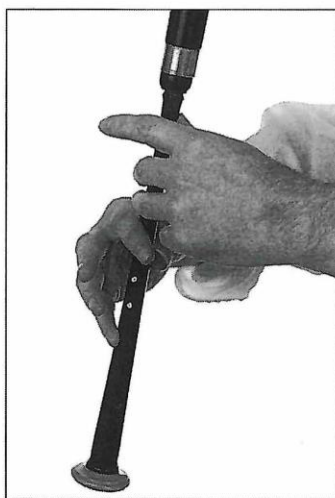
This represents C to B with a G gracenote between, or as we often say, C followed by a G gracenote on B.

To play it, sound C then raise the high G finger to sound the gracenote. Place it back on the G hole and as it is falling put the C finger on the chanter and raise the little finger at the same time.

Once more illustrations show the movement clearly:



1 C being played



2 The high G finger is raised



3 The high G finger and the C finger back on, and little finger raised to form B

Practise this movement many times and then try playing:



THROWS AND DOUBLINGS

Each note has associated with it a 'doubling' which is a group of three gracenotes played before the note for the purpose of embellishing it and adding interest to the melody. On some notes we can also do a 'throw' which has the same effect.

The throw on D is practised first because it is the only one which may be played in alternative ways.

ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF PLAYING THE THROW ON D

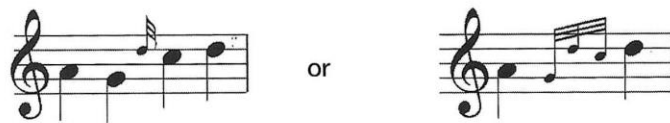
Most of the top pipers, especially in piobaireachd (ceol mor), will make the throw on D in what we will call Style I, and beginning on low A:

1 Sound a low G

2 Make a D gracenote on C (play a full D and drop the D finger quickly down to C)

3 Play D

This could be written:



Some also play the 'heavier' throw, Style II, especially in ceol beag (marches, strathspeys, and reels etc.) where it is played more quickly and evenly, with slightly less emphasis on the first low G. Again beginning on low A:

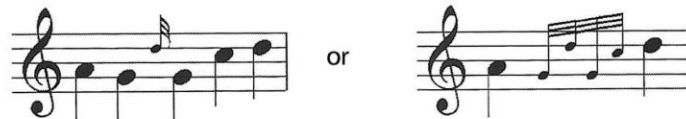
1 Sound low G

2 Make a D gracenote so that another low G is heard

3 Play C

4 Play D

This could be written:



See page 62 for the complete D gracenote scale.

Style II sounds unpleasant if played too openly, particularly in piobaireachd and slow airs. For this reason it may be easier to adopt Style I safe in the knowledge that when played properly it sounds good in both ceol beag and ceol mor. It is best not to change from one style to the other, though, as we've said, many of the very best pipers use Style I for ceol mor and Style II for ceol beag. On the Tutor 1, CDRom audio file it is Style II that is taught.

Practise the throw on D slowly and evenly many times. SLOWLY, because that is the only way to become proficient in any tune or exercise, and EVENLY so that eventually the proper sound will emerge.

The throw on D usually appears in tunes immediately following some other note, so it is important to be able to perform this doubling after other notes without mistake or hesitation.

We will try different examples using Styles I and II.



represents F followed by the throw on D using Style I.

For this:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Play F | 3 Make a D gracenote on C |
| 2 Sound low G | 4 Play D |



This represents B followed by the throw on D using Style II.

For this:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1 Play B | 3 Make the D gracenote |
| 2 Close the chanter to sound the first low G of the throw on D | 4 Play C |
| | 5 Play D |

When the movement has been practised for a while it can be done quite quickly and some of the notes become so short that they are really gracenotes and are joined together. Practice the D throw from every note on the scale (see page 62). Most pipers, no matter how they play the throw on D, write it as per Style I. All modern collections of pipe music use this form. Accordingly, from now on we shall write the throw on D in this way, and the people who decide to play Style II will interpret the symbol in their own way.

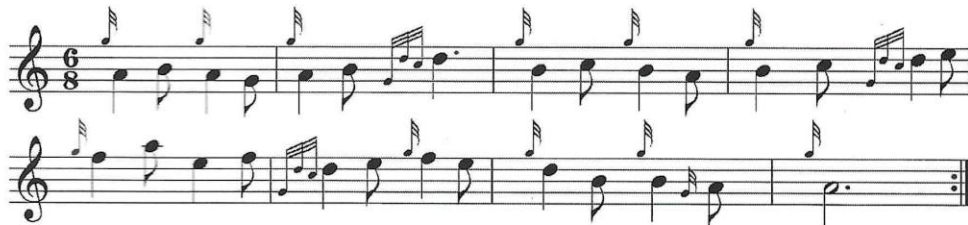
By now, having practised and revised all that has gone before, you are ready to learn your first tune. Keep playing regularly up and down the scale; the G, D, E gracenotes should be building up dexterity where it is most needed. Be sure that you can perform the throw on the D accurately, even if slowly, from all notes.

With this ability soundly acquired, the playing of tunes only requires the co-ordination of eyes and fingers. Remember that the job of the eyes is to watch the music; do not allow yourself to develop the bad habit of watching your fingers.


LESSON 4

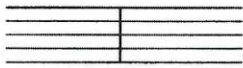
SCOTS WHA HA'E - First Measure

slow air

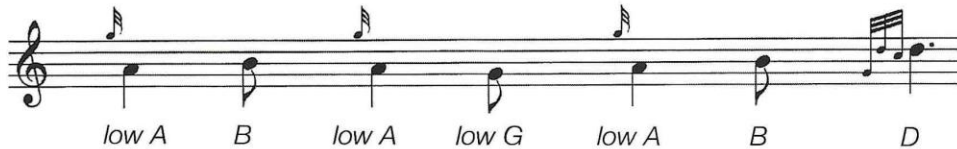


The above is the first part, or 'measure' as it is called, of *Scots Wha Ha'e Wi' Wallace Bled* (*Scots Who Have With Wallace Bled*), or *Bruce's Address to His Troops At Bannockburn*.

The sign:  is called the treble clef, but the significance of it will be explained later. At present we can get on with learning a tune without worrying about it.

The vertical lines:  divide the measure into 'bars', which are convenient phrases of the tune.

Study the first two bars. If we spread them out and write the names of the various notes underneath, they look like:



Now try playing these bars SLOWLY and CAREFULLY on the chanter. Repeat them many times, then tackle the other bars in the same way.

As a general principle, you must always, when learning a tune, sacrifice the melody for the sake of correctness in making throws or doublings, or in playing other new or difficult movements.

In this tune you must play the throw on D very slowly at first even though this will mean that the melody will be broken.

The particular points to note in playing each bar are as follows:

Bar 1: The tune begins with a G gracenote on low A, so start to blow as you make the gracenote.

Bar 2: Be sure to close the chanter properly at the start of the throw on D. You must always hear a distinct low G at the beginning of this movement.

Bars 3 & 4: Make sure that the little finger is on the chanter when playing the Cs.

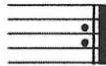
Bar 4: Remember to perform the throw on D slowly and correctly. Be careful of the crossing from D to E.

Bars 5 & 6: In going from F to the throw on D, be sure to 'close the chanter' (that is, sound low G) at the start of the throw.

Bar 7: The low G gracenote, written after the second B and before the first low A, is produced by putting down both fingers on to the chanter to sound low G, and then lifting the little finger almost immediately to form the low A.

Bar 8: Be sure to give the final low A its full two beat value.

The double bar:



at the end signifies the finish of a part or a measure.

The two dots (in the low A and C spaces) mean that the measure has to be played twice.

After you have tried playing this measure several times, you should copy it carefully into your manuscript book and continue practising the tune from your own copy.

This procedure, although apparently unnecessary, is absolutely essential if you are to learn to read music quickly.

TOP TIP

1. Keep your fingers as relaxed as possible
2. Keep your fingers straight at all times
3. Make sure your wrists are not 'kinked'



Good



Not so good!

LESSON 5 ♣

STRIKES

Gracenotes between two similar notes – for example, between two Fs or two Es – can be produced by touching the chanter with one or more of the raised fingers.

If you play F and then touch the chanter lightly and quickly with the F finger, a little E gracenote comes out, and then F is sounded again.

This would be written:



Similarly if you play E and then touch with the E finger you produce a low A gracenote between two Es:



Practise these touches slowly and carefully.

DOUBLE HIGH G

This doubling is performed as follows:

1 Make a high G gracenote on F, then

2 Raise the high G finger

When practising this, it is convenient to start by playing some other note, low A for example, but it, of course, is not part of the doubling.

On first thoughts we might imagine that double high G should be written:



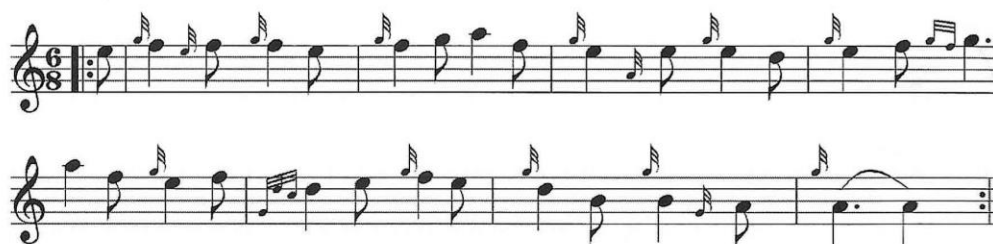
and the extra strokes on the F would indicate, as usual, that this note is of short duration. But the F is actually so short, with practice, that it becomes a gracenote, and the doubling is written:



Again, practise this slowly. Play also:



SCOTS WHA HA'E – Second Measure



Read the first bar aloud, and then try playing it slowly and carefully on the chanter. Repeat it many times then try the other bars in the same way. The particular points to note are:

Bar 1: Be sure you make the strike on F cleanly and follow it with a G gracenote.

Bar 3: Watch for E to D crossing noises.

Bars 5, 6 & 7: As per the same bars in the first measure.

Bar 8: Be sure to give the final low A its full two beat value.

Copy this measure into your manuscript book, and, as before, continue practising from your own copy. Remember to play each part twice, and keep in mind the various points mentioned above.

LESSON 6 ♣

When you think you have mastered *Scots Wha Ha'e* it is time to prepare for the next tune. Before we start it, however, you must learn some new finger movements. The first is called:

HALF DOUBLE F

In tunes, this occurs usually after a high A, so we will practise it always with high A in front. Place your fingers in position for the note high A, then change to F, and then make a G gracenote still on F.

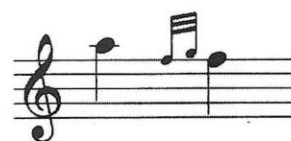
Try this first without blowing so that you understand what is to be done. You have to:

- 1 Play high A
- 2 Change to F
- 3 Make a G gracenote on F

You might imagine that this movement should be written:



but the first F is so short that it really becomes a gracenote itself, and when the two gracenotes are tied together for convenience, high A followed by half double F looks like:



Practise this slowly many times. Be sure to make a clean G gracenote after the first short F.

Next we have to learn the:

STRIKE ON D

The strike, or slur as it is described on the audio file, is another of the simple movements in piping. It is performed as follows:

- 1 Make a G gracenote on D
- 2 Strike the chanter holes quickly with the three raised fingers (that is, the B, C, and D fingers) so that a little low G is heard before D is heard again.

This movement shows the necessity of keeping all raised fingers close to, and at the same distance from, the chanter at all times. When playing the strike to low G you must be sure to hit the chanter AT THE SAME TIME with all three fingers, otherwise little extra notes will be heard. The strike on D might be written:



the little tail on the first D indicating that it is a shorter note. As a matter of fact, however, the first D becomes very short after you have practised the movement often, and eventually becomes a gracenote. The three gracenotes are then tied together, and the strike on D is written as:



Again practise this slowly many times. Remember that you must hear a distinct, though short, D before the three fingers touch the chanter TOGETHER to make the low G gracenote. A lighter D strike movement can also be played by simply striking the D finger to C. When you are sure of half double F and the strike on D you might like to learn the popular air *Amazing Grace*.

AMAZING GRACE

slow air



You are now ready to learn *The Brown Haired Maiden*. The first thing to do when learning this and the next seven or eight tunes, is to read them aloud slowly, so that you are quite sure of what is required before you start to play.

BROWN HAired MAIDEN - first measure

march



Each time it is important to realise that there will be nothing new in the tune itself. Only the sequence of notes and doublings can be different, because you will have learned all the new movements before you tackle the tune. The introductory note at the beginning, along with the first bar is read as:

'Low A, throw on D, C, G gracenote on B, low G gracenote on low A'

Proceed now to read aloud the whole of this first measure. When you are sure that you understand all the notes and doublings, begin to play the tune slowly on the chanter.

Remember the golden rule. NEVER TAKE A BREATH AT A CROSSING. Listen carefully for any suspicion of crossing noises. The important points to watch are as follows:

Bar 1: Close the chanter cleanly for the throw on D – make sure that the first low G gracenote is clearly heard. A dot immediately after a note means that that note must be played a little longer than usual. You must rest a little, therefore, on the first D. The low G gracenote from B to low A is made in exactly the same way as in the last bar of Scots Wha Ha'e, that is, put down the B and little fingers firmly on the chanter, and then lift the little finger immediately.

Bar 2: Close the chanter firmly for the throws on D. Rest well on the first D throw.

Bar 3: Make a clean G gracenote on F. Play double high G slowly.

Bar 4: The low A gracenote between the two Es is made exactly as in the previous tune by touching the E hole smartly with the E finger.

Bar 5: Rest on the dotted high A. Play half double F slowly.

Bar 6: Rest well on the low A – it is a longer note than even the throw on D which is dotted.

Bar 7: Make a clean, big, G gracenote on F, and rest on F.

Bar 8: Watch the strike on D.

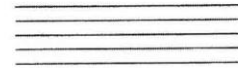
Practise this measure slowly many times, and when you feel you understand it, copy it carefully into your manuscript book.

Continue to revise all that you have learned so far. Consult the photographs and diagrams regularly to check that you have your fingers straight and in the correct position for each note. You should be fully satisfied with your performance before passing to the next lesson.

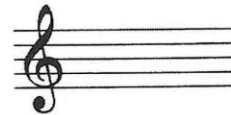
LESSON 8

We must now take some time off to consider more fully the writing of music. Do not be led astray by the common belief that reading music is difficult. It is actually very simple. In a short time you will be able to read a tune as quickly as you are able to read its title.

The five lined staff is used to mark the positions of the various notes of the scale:



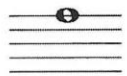
The treble clef is the name given to the sign (right). It is also known as the G clef because it is really just a very old form of the letter G. You will notice that it is always entwined round the second bottom line of the staff to indicate that that line is the G line.



The Great Staff showing the position of the bass and tenor drones.

You should be able to play the correct notes and gracenotes in any tune, just by observing the position of the head of the note on the staff. For example:

The problem arises now of how long we should spend on each note. How do we know which notes are long and which are short? The answer to this is to be found in the SHAPE of the note. The longest note we are ever likely to use is the semi-breve or whole note, which is represented by:



As you see, it has an open head and no tail.

Half a semi-breve, or a **half-note**, is shaped thus:





and is called a minim.

A **quarter-note**, or half of a minim, is:



and is called a crotchet.


An **eighth-note**, or half of a crotchet, is:  and is given the name quaver.

A **sixteenth-note**, or half of a quaver, is called a **semi-quaver**, and is shaped: 

Finally, a **thirty-second-note**, or **demi-semi-quaver**, is shaped: 

To sum up, the principal notes used in piping (omitting the semi-breve and the minim, which only occur rarely) are:

The 1/4 note:  called a **crotchet**.

This equals two 1/8th notes:  called **quavers** . . .

. . . or four 1/16th notes:  called **semi-quavers** . . .


. . . or eight 1/32nd notes:  called **demi-semi quavers**.


You will notice that often when two quavers occur together, a stroke is drawn to join both tails.

That is, instead of writing:  we write:  and so on.

THE USE OF THE DOT

Very often we require to play a note which does not fit in with the scheme outlined above. That is, it is longer than one note but not so long as double that note.



For example, suppose we wish to play a note which is longer than a quaver 

but not so long as a crotchet  which is, of course, equal to two quavers.

The obvious thing for us to do is to play a note which is equal to one and a half quavers. This note is called a **dotted quaver**, and is represented by putting a dot after the quaver, thus:



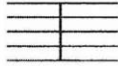
A dotted note is equal to one and a half times the value of the same note without the dot. That is:

 a dotted crotchet =  three quavers

 a dotted quaver = 1½ quavers =  three semi-quavers, and so on.

BARS

For convenience, all tunes are divided up into **bars** by **bar lines** thus:



The part of the tune contained between two successive bar lines is called a 'bar' of the tune. Generally speaking, the total time taken to play each bar in any particular tune, is, on paper, the same, since each bar usually contains the same total value of notes. In other words, bars are just convenient, equal divisions of the tune.

COUNTING THE NOTE VALUES

Different tunes contain different total values of notes in each bar. For example, some tunes have the equivalent of two crotchets in each bar, some have the equivalent of three crotchets in each bar, and so on.

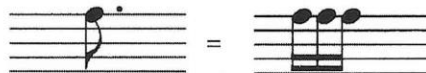
Look at the first bars of *Brown Haired Maiden*:



Gracenotes and doublings do not count when adding up time values. The time taken to play these is very small, and in fact is taken off the melody notes.

Looking at the sample above, the first two notes in bar 1 are D (a dotted quaver) and C (a semi-quaver).

One dotted quaver equals three semi-quavers, i.e.:



Therefore:



so that the first two notes get the total time value of one crotchet or one quarter note.

Similarly, we can add up the time values of the other notes in the bar and we find that the bar contains the equivalent of two crotchets. You can check that all the other bars in *Brown Haired Maiden* contain the equivalent of two crotchets too.

TIME SIGNATURES

To show the total time value in each bar of a tune, we place two numbers at the beginning. This is the 'time signature'. If each bar of a particular tune contains the equivalent of two crotchets, then our time signature for that tune could be two crotchets. A crotchet is a quarter note so we could write $2\frac{1}{4}$ at the start but this is always shortened to $2/4$. We read this as 'two-four' and we know that any tune with the time signature $2/4$ placed on the staff at the beginning is a tune having the equivalent of two crotchets in each bar. In the same way, the time signature $3/4$ means that each bar contains three crotchets or their equivalent, and $4/4$ means four crotchets or their equivalent in each bar. $4/4$ time, read as 'four - four' time, is also called 'common time', so usually the time signature for it is simply a large letter C. *The Brown Haired Maiden* is in $2/4$ time, having the equivalent of two crotchets in each bar, and *Scots Wha Ha'e*, with the equivalent of six quavers in the bar, is in $6/8$ time. Commonly used Simple Time signatures used in piping are $2/4$, $4/4$ and $3/4$. Commonly used Compound Time signatures are $6/8$ and $9/8$.

BEATING TIME

You will probably have noticed that beating time is often a necessary accompaniment to playing music. The piper keeps time as he/she marches, or, if standing still, beats time with the foot.

For many tunes, one beat is given to every quarter-note or crotchet. Such tunes are said to be in simple time. For *The Brown Haired Maiden*, therefore, the time signature $2/4$ not only tells us there are two quarter-notes in each bar, but also lets us know there are two beats in each bar.

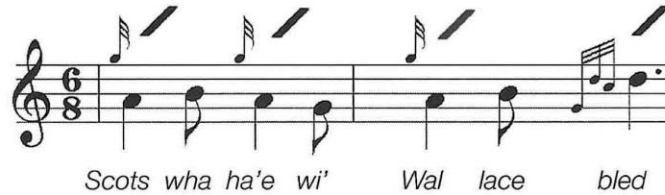
MONOTONE EXERCISES

Piping examinations ask for candidates to demonstrate monotone exercises. Monotone simply means one single sound. For these examinations a monotone exercise means repeating that single sound in the rhythmic pattern of a given tune or time signature. To demonstrate a monotone exercise you simply take a pencil or pen and lightly tap out the number of beats to the bar as required. For a $6/8$ tune (compound time) you would play six taps to the bar in a strong, weak, weak/strong, weak, weak pattern. For a $2/4$ tune (simple time) you would play two taps to the bar in a strong and weak pattern and for $4/4$ (simple time), four taps to the bar in a strong, weak, medium, weak pattern. Practice this before sitting your examination! For more on these exercises go to the College website. Click on Examinations and follow the links.

RHYTHM

In all kinds of music, some notes are strong, or accented, while others are weak. By emphasising certain notes at regular intervals we produce what is called rhythm. As we have seen, another method of producing emphasis in piping is by means of gracenotes. Try this experiment of doing several things at one time. Turn to your copy of *Scots Wha Ha'e*, then sing the melody and beat time with your foot watching the music at the same time. The quality of your voice does not matter! Now when you have tried this a few times and know you are beating your foot at the right time, mark a stroke like this / above the notes which get a beat. **Do this now before reading further.**

Your first bar should look like:



The first beats in the song fall on 'Scots', 'ha'e', and 'Wal-', so notes corresponding to these must be the accented ones. Complete the accent marks (/) on the rest of the tune.

You will notice now the following rules:

- 1 There are two strong beats in each bar (because this is 6/8 time).
- 2 The first note in each bar gets a beat.
- 3 The second beat is at the end of the bar but not always on the last note.

Rule 1 shows that the number of beats in each bar depends on the time signature. Rules 2 and 3 are generally true for all tunes. They should help you to beat correctly for the majority of the tunes you learn.

Mark in the accent marks on your copy of *The Brown Haired Maiden*. When you are able to play it well, try beating time as you play.

IMPORTANT: Remember that you have to be able to play a tune very well before you can beat time to it. When learning a tune you have to sacrifice melody and regular tempo for the sake of correctness in making doublings or in playing other new or difficult parts.

LESSON 9

Before trying the next tune you must learn some more doublings. First is:

DOUBLE C

This one really lives up to its name, for it is just two Cs the first one having a G gracenote and the second a D gracenote on it. Place your fingers in position for the note C, then blow and make a G gracenote and then a D gracenote with a short interval between them.

This could be written:



but the first C, after some practice, can be very short and becomes a gracenote.

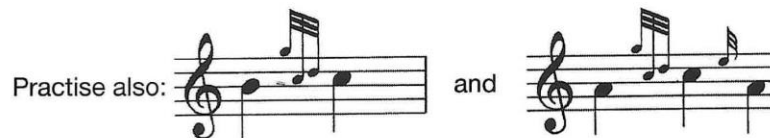
The three gracenotes are then tied together for neatness and double C looks like:



Practise double C after low A, that is:



To do this: 1 Sound low A 2 Make a G gracenote on C 3 Make a D gracenote still on C



Double C is one of the most important doublings in piping. It appears very simple after a while, but don't fall into any bad habits. Be careful always:

- 1 To make the G and D gracenotes big
 - 2 To separate them, so that the little C gracenote is always distinctly heard
- One further doubling and then we will be ready to start the next tune. This one is:

DOUBLE B

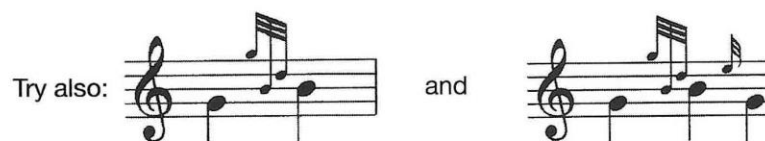
This follows the same pattern as the previous one. All you do is make a G gracenote on B followed closely by a D gracenote still on B.

As you might expect by now, this is written:



since the first B becomes a short note separating the G and D gracenotes.

Again be very careful when practising this doubling to ensure that the G and D gracenotes are always quite separate and distinct.



From low G, sound the starting note, then change to B making a clean G gracenote at the same time, and then make a distinct D gracenote. Concentrate, as always, on accuracy and let speed of performance come along in its own good time.

Practise these doublings, and keep revising all that you have learned so far, and you will soon be ready for the *High Road to Gairloch*.

Watch your playing of the three doublings: double C, double D (the D throw) and double B. Each time, in this and all tunes, make sure that you play these correctly, even if you are slow with them.

Make the other gracenotes cleanly on the notes. You will now have overcome any tendency to take a breath at a crossing. You should by this time be able to play at least half a measure, even quite slowly, in one breath. Do not get into the bad habit of taking a lot of short breaths.

This is a 2/4 tune, which means that there are two beats in every bar, and a 1/4 note (or crotchet) goes to make up each beat. When you think you understand this part, copy it into your book and continue to practise it and your other tunes from there. In piping, because of the nature and function of the bagpipe, every tune must be memorised. You should now be trying to play the first few tunes without looking at the music.

LESSON 11

We are now ready to learn some more doublings. First is: **DOUBLE F**

This one again lives up to its name, for it is just two Fs, each having a G gracenote on it. Place your fingers in position for the note F, then blow and make two G gracenotes, one after the other, with a short interval between them. You might think that this doubling should be written:



but the F between the two gracenotes is so short that it is really a gracenote itself, and when the three gracenotes are tied together for convenience, double F looks like:



Practise double F after E, that is:

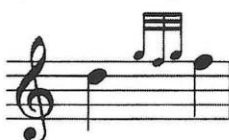


Sound E, make a G gracenote on F by lifting the G and F fingers at the same time and dropping the G finger to F, followed by another G gracenote on F.

Try also:



and

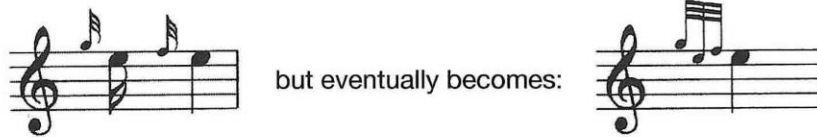


many times until you have thoroughly mastered this doubling.

Be sure each time to make the two G gracenotes quite distinctly with the short F between them.

Next to be learned is: **DOUBLE E**

This one is performed by making a G gracenote on E followed closely by an F gracenote, still on E. The gracenotes must be done smartly but must not be run together – a very short E note separates them. Again the doubling done slowly would be written:



as the E between the G and F gracenotes becomes quite short. Be careful at all times, however, to keep the G and F gracenotes separate with a distinct E between them. Never let them run into one another. To avoid this common error, practise the doubling slowly at all times and think consciously of separating the G and F gracenotes.



In each case sound the first note, make a clean G gracenote on E and then a distinct F gracenote, still on E. F and E doublings are of the highest importance. The ability to do them cleanly with the gracenotes big and separate is the mark of the well-trained piper. **From F, the G gracenote must be made as you would a plain high G with the three top hand fingers raised. One of the most common errors in piping is the false E doubling from F caused by beginners not adhering to this rule.** When you have practised E doublings for a while you are ready to try the next tune, the well-known:

HIGHLAND LADDIE – First Measure

march



Begin, as usual, by reading the whole measure aloud. The two introductory notes, along with the first bar, will be read as:

'G gracenote on low A, B, D throw, E, G gracenote on F, high A.'

Proceed now to read aloud the whole of this first measure. When you are sure that you understand all the notes and doublings, begin to play the tune slowly on the chanter.

The tune starts with a G gracenote on low A, so start to blow as you make the gracenote.

Other points to watch are as follows:

Bar 1: Close the chanter cleanly for the D throw – make sure that the first low G gracenote is clearly heard.

Bar 2: The first four notes should be played slowly at first. The last note, F, is a crotchet, and is therefore as long as the other four notes in the bar put together. Be sure to rest on it.

Bars 3 & 4: Play the double F and double E slowly and correctly.

Bar 5: Watch the D throw.

Bar 6: Make a clean double F from D.

Bar 7: Close the chanter properly for the throw on D from F. Be careful of the E gracenote on B.

Bar 8: As bar 7.

Practise this measure many times, and then, when you feel you understand it, copy it into your manuscript book. Continue to revise all that you have learned so far and be satisfied with your performance before passing on to the next lesson. You should be able to check now that rules 2 and 3 at the end of Lesson 8 apply to this tune and the *High Road to Gairloch*.

LESSON 12 ♣

This lesson starts with another doubling – a very simple one however: **DOUBLE HIGH A**

To perform it:

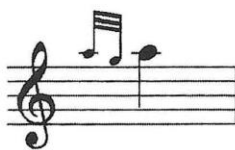
1 Play high A.

2 Your top hand thumb is now off the chanter. Bring it down quickly in a sweeping motion so that it brushes over the high A hole. This causes a short high G (not a true high G because the E finger is kept on) to be heard. Thus a doubling, consisting of two high As separated by a high G, is formed.

When performed slowly, this would be written:



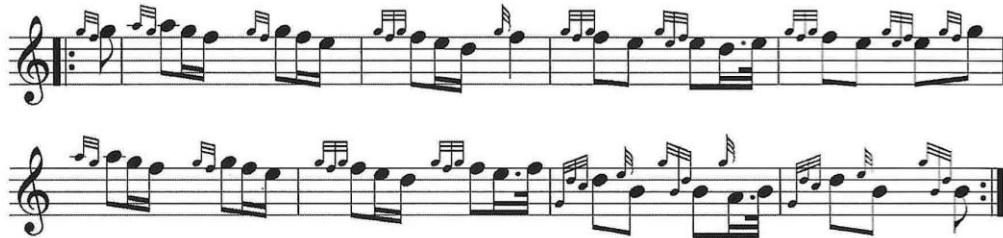
Normally the first high A is very short and becomes a gracenote too, so that the doubling is properly written:



Practise this doubling from high G. That is, sound high G, change to high A, and then immediately sweep the thumb down, brushing the high A hole for the doubling.

This doubling takes a lot of explaining, but is one of the easiest to perform. You should be ready now to try the second measure of *Highland Laddie*.

HIGHLAND LADDIE - Second Measure



Begin, as before, by reading the tune aloud. This would be, 'double high G, double high A, high G, F, double high G, F, E,' and so on. Then try the part slowly and carefully on the chanter.

The points to note are:

Bar 1: *Play the double high G and double high A slowly.*

Bar 2: *Make a clean double F, with distinct gracenotes. The last note in the bar, F, is a crotchet so be sure to rest on it.*

Bars 3 & 4: *As first measure.*

Bars 5 & 6: *As bars 1 and 2.*

Bars 7 & 8: *As first measure.*

You will be beginning to notice that piping gets easier as you go along. The second measure of this tune has eight bars, but only two of them are new to us.

Keep playing this measure over slowly until you feel you are beginning to grasp it, then copy it into your manuscript book.

Continue practising your four tunes regularly, remembering to play each measure twice, and of course practise the doublings separately as well.

You have now completed about twelve weeks study of the technique necessary to play the pipes well. After a few more days of practice you should be ready to proceed with the next stage.

TOP TIP

When playing the chanter keep the mouthpiece in the centre of your mouth and don't puff out your cheeks. This is a bad habit to get into and will affect your posture when you come to play the pipe.



Good



Not so good

LESSON 13 ❁

LEUMLUATH

The next new movement is the 'Leumluath' (pronounced 'loomloo', or 'lumlooa') or 'Grip'.

The Grip (leumluath) on E is written:



which means that you:

- 1 Play E
- 2 Close the chanter to sound low G
- 3 Make a D gracenote (still on low G)
- 4 Play E

The two low Gs and the D become short with practice and so are written as gracenotes.

Try also from other notes as per the scale on p63 and also these:



Practise each one slowly and carefully.

TAORLUATH

The next movement you have to learn is called the 'Taorluath' (pronounced 'torloo' or 'torlooa').

This is a movement done on various notes, but we shall consider it first from low A to low A:



We will begin this time trying to play it by examining the way in which it is written. Obviously it starts with a G gracenote on low A. Next follows a low G gracenote. Well, there is only one way to do that, and that is to close the chanter by putting on all fingers.

Then we have a D gracenote followed by a low G gracenote, so obviously you just make a D gracenote on the low G you are playing, and both are formed. Finally we have an E gracenote on low A, so you do that and finish the movement.

To summarise, then:

- 1 Make a G gracenote on low A
- 2 Close the chanter (or in other words, sound low G)
- 3 Make a D gracenote, still on low G
- 4 Make an E gracenote on low A

The taorluath is one of the most important movements in piping. It appears in every class of pipe music, and your ability to play it is one of the strongest factors in determining how good a player you are. It is most important that you learn to play it well.

As usual, practise it slowly and carefully. It is really very easy to play provided you always remember to make sure the first low G gracenote is clearly heard. The important thing is to close the chanter well at the beginning.

We will try one other taorluath at present, from B to B, and then leave you to practise them for a while. It looks like:



Again this is performed in much the same way as the taorluath on low A.

That is:

- 1 Make a G gracenote on B
- 2 Close the chanter
- 3 Make a D gracenote (still on low G)
- 4 Make an E gracenote on B

When practising a taorluath slowly, it should sound like four perfectly even notes, in this case:

1	2	3	4
B	low G	low G	B

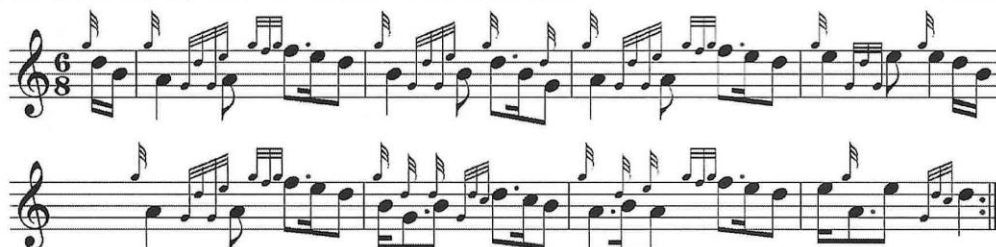
As always, you will have no trouble if you practise it slowly, evenly and often.

NB: The taorluath from D is played with a B gracenote (yes, B) instead of D. This takes a lot of practice but in all other respects the D taorluath is the same as the others. See the complete scale on page 63.

Now you are ready for the next tune.

THE CARLES WI' THE BREEKS - First Measure

slow air



This tune is in 6/8 time (read 'six-eight time'). The rules regarding time in Lesson 8 apply to this, as to all tunes. 6/8 time is called 'Compound Time' (as distinct from Simple Time). In Compound Time each beat can be divided into three equal parts, whereas in Simple Time each beat can be divided into two (or four) equal parts. In other words, a tune in Simple Time goes like: 'One, two; one, two . . .' while a tune in Compound Time goes: 'One, two, three; one, two, three; one, two, three . . .' In 6/8 time we have in each bar the equivalent of six eighth notes (or quavers). Each group of three quavers (or the equivalent) gets one of the two beats in each bar.

The time of the tune, of course, need only concern us once we can play it fairly well. The most important thing is to play all the notes, gracenotes and doublings correctly. Read the measure aloud and then try to play it slowly, as usual. Although this tune and *Scots Wha Ha'e* are slow airs, all 6/8s are not slow – 6/8 marches are among the sprightliest tunes we have. The special points to note here are:

Bar 1: Take the taorluath slowly. Make a good double F. The beats are on the first low A and the F.

Bar 2: Taorluath on B – be sure to sound the first low G gracenote carefully.

Bar 4: Close the chanter firmly for the grip.

Bar 6: The first B is a semi-quaver and so is quite short. Go down fairly quickly to low G and rest a little on it since it is a dotted quaver.

Bar 7: Practise the first three notes many times – play the gracenotes cleanly on each note.

Bar 8: The first E is short.

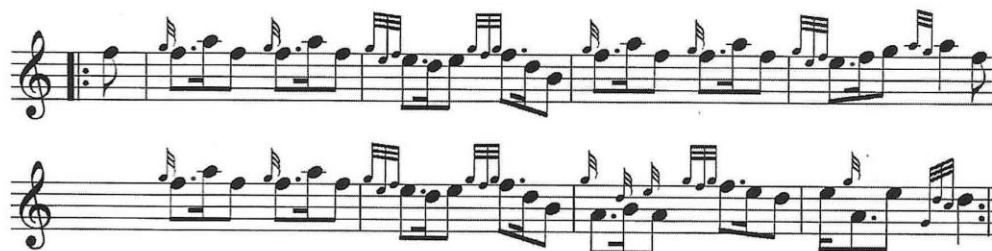
Practise this measure in the usual way, paying particular attention to the taorluaths. Copy it into your manuscript book and continue to practise it with all your other tunes. You should now be able to play some more of your tunes off by heart, but check them occasionally with the copy in case you are making any mistakes.

Examine the values of the notes in the tunes, and be sure that you are giving each one its correct value. Continue to try beating your foot as you practise the tunes you can play well. Remember that each lesson is something new added to the number of things you must keep practising.

LESSON 14

As before, the second measure of *Carles Wi' the Breeks* contains no new movement. Whenever you feel confident that you thoroughly understand the first part you may proceed with the second.

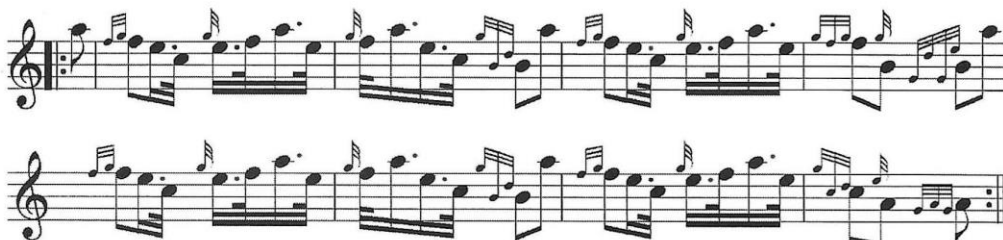
THE CARLES WI' THE BREEKS – Second Measure



By now you may be able to make your first attempt without reading the whole measure, so start playing it in your usual careful fashion.

LESSON 16

THE 79th's FAREWELL TO GIBRALTAR – Second Measure



Again read the measure aloud and then try playing it slowly with the following in mind:

Bar 1: *Half-double F.*

Bar 2: *Double B.*

Bar 4: *Double F – make the gracenotes large and separate; B taorluath.*

Bar 8: *Be careful of double C from E. Make the G gracenote big and early. Watch the B finger when you are playing the birl.*

Write this into your book and practise the two measures together. Keep revising your other tunes and all the doublings etc.

LESSON 17 ♣

THE GRIP TO C

In the third part of the '79ths' we find the grip from B to C.

It is written:

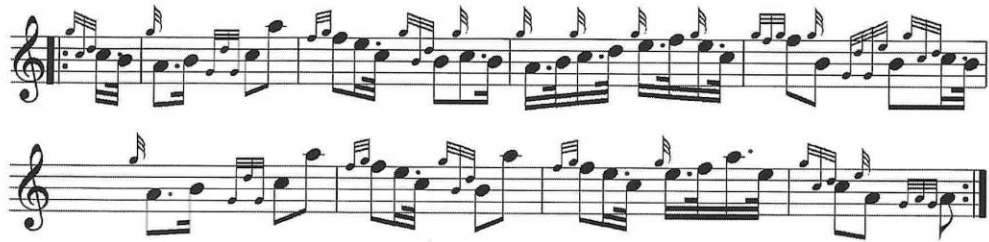


To play this you:

- 1 *Sound B*
- 2 *Close the chanter (low G gracenote)*
- 3 *Make a D gracenote still on low G*
- 4 *Sound C*

Practise this many times, being careful to sound both of the low G gracenotes clearly. Now we are ready for the third measure of the 79th's *Farewell to Gibraltar*.

THE 79th's FAREWELL TO GIBRALTAR – Third Measure



Read it over and then try it carefully. Play the throw from B to C very slowly each time, making sure that you sound both low G gracenotes clearly. Other points to watch are:

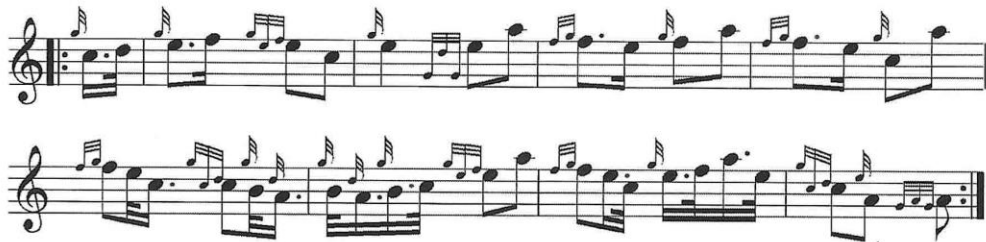
Bar 2: Make a clean double B. Be sure to put the little finger down for the C immediately following.

Bar 4: Separate the gracenotes in double C, here and at the beginning of the measure. Be sure the little finger is on for these Cs.

Write this measure into your manuscript book.

LESSON 18

THE 79th's FAREWELL TO GIBRALTAR – Fourth Measure



Read it aloud, paying particular attention to the gracenotes in bars 5 and 6, then try it on the chanter slowly. Be careful of:

Bar 1: Double E after F.

Bar 2: Grip E to E.

Bars 3 & 4: Half-double Fs.

Bar 5: Half-double F, double C, G gracenote on B, D gracenote on low A.

Bar 6: G gracenote on B, D gracenote on low A, G gracenote on B, C.

Bar 8: Double C, birl.

Practise particularly bars 5 and 6 because, although they may not look it, they are the most difficult phrases you have so far tried to learn. Write this fourth and final measure of the tune into your book.

When you have practised this tune until you can play it as well as the others, you have reached a definitive stage in your piping career. You may now like to sit your Grade 1 exam. Go to www.collegeofpiping.org for details.

If you are learning on your own you really need now to have an experienced teacher hear you play your tunes so that he/she can correct any basic mistakes in the positioning of your fingers, or in the actual fingering during tunes. Before you do this revise all eighteen lessons in detail. If you can't get to a teacher arrange a lesson over the internet with the College.

The *79th's Farewell to Gibraltar* is not only a pleasant melody, it is a test tune. If you can play it competently, and master Lessons 1 to 18 successfully, then you can definitely be a good piper. Whether you become a very good or an excellent player depends on the amount of practice you are prepared to do and the natural ability you have been blessed with.

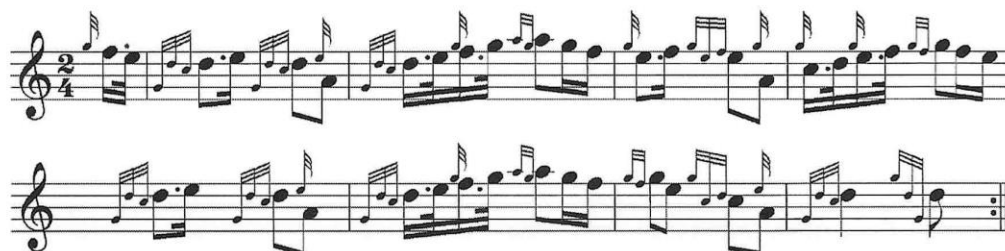
LESSON 19

Most of the important finger movements have to be learned at the beginning in piping. Although you must always be on the alert, and though you will require a lot of help as tunes become more difficult, you have now not very many new movements to learn – at least not until you start ceol mor, the most important part of the piping art.

The next tune we shall learn has three measures, the first of which contains nothing new.

THE EARL OF MANSFIELD – First Measure

march



Try it over slowly, noting the following points:

Bar 3: In double E, make a clean G gracenote on E.

Bar 7: Make a big G gracenote at the start of double C.

Again, practise the measure slowly. Note that the beat falls on the first group of tied notes.

LESSON 20 ♣

THUMB GRACENOTES

Occasionally, as you have seen, we make use of fingers other than G, D, and E for making gracenotes. For example, in double E the F finger makes a gracenote.

The thumb also is sometimes used, and we will now consider two cases.



The first example represents high G followed by a thumb or high A gracenote on F. (The ordinary G, D, or E gracenotes would be impossible here as you will have worked out.)

To do this, sound high G, then change to F, making a gracenote with your thumb at the same time.

These instructions should be sufficient by this time for you to accomplish the movement, but just in case you are not quite sure, here are the details:

1 Sound high G

2 Lift off the thumb a little bit

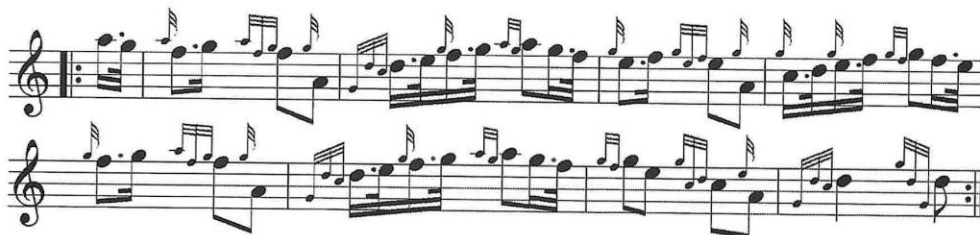
3 Replace the thumb and put on the high G finger at the same time to sound F.

NB: All the fingers of the top hand are momentarily off the chanter when making this movement.



This second example is called the 'thumb doubling on F', and is just a double F except that the first gracenote is done with the thumb instead of the high G finger. To do this, sound high G, make a thumb gracenote on F, then make a high G gracenote. This is fairly easy to do, but practise it slowly and carefully just the same. When you think you have got the idea of thumb gracenotes, it is time to try:

THE EARL OF MANSFIELD – Second Measure



You will notice that, apart from the thumb gracenotes and doublings, this measure is much the same as the first measure, so you just have to watch the same points. Practise the two parts slowly together and write them into your manuscript book as usual. If you are sure of the first two parts of the *Earl of Mansfield* you are now ready for the third.

LESSON 21

THE EARL OF MANSFIELD – Third Measure

The musical notation consists of three staves. The top staff is marked '1st' and contains a complex melodic line with many grace notes and slurs. The middle staff contains a similar but simpler melodic line. The bottom staff is marked '2nd' and contains a more intricate melodic line with many grace notes and slurs, similar in style to the top staff.

You will notice that a variation is introduced when this measure is repeated, the part marked '2nd' being played instead of the piece marked '1st'. This is a common shorthand way of writing a measure which does not repeat exactly.

Practise the whole tune now, watching carefully the important points already indicated.

LESSON 22

You have now learned several tunes, marches and slow airs, and provided you are practising these regularly, it is time to try a strathspey. This type of tune can be used to accompany dances of the same name. They are characterised by four snappy beats in each bar. Strathspey is also the name of a particularly beautiful region of the Scottish Highlands.

INVERNESS RANT – First Measure

strathspey

The musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with many grace notes and slurs. The bottom staff is also in treble clef and contains a similar melodic line, but with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' and a slur.

As usual, begin by reading the measure aloud, and, just to help you a little, here is how to play the first notes: low A, throw on D, E gracenote on low A, D, G gracenote on B, D, E gracenote on low A, B. Read through the rest of the measure, and then try it slowly and carefully on the chanter. Watch the following points:

Bar 1: Close the chanter properly for the throw on D. Rest on the first and third Ds (longer on the first one), and on the two low As.

Bar 2: Watch the D throw. Make clean distinct doublings of F and E. Be sure to get your little finger down for the C.

Bar 3: As bar 1.

Bar 4: Be careful of the thumb gracenotes. The 3 above the E, F, and high G means that they should be played in the time of two quavers; that is, evenly, in a little run.

Practise the measure slowly and carefully as usual. Remember the significance of the two dots at the end. Keep revising your other tunes and all the other things you have learned so far.

LESSON 23 ♣

THE TACHUM

Again, we start with a new movement. This one is called the 'tachum' because that is what it sounds like. It is written:



and, as you see, is read, D, G gracenote on C, D gracenote on low A. The important thing is that the C is a semi-quaver, a fairly short note, so you have to make a D gracenote to low A quickly after the G gracenote on C. This takes just a bit of careful practice to get the D gracenote in properly. As always, practise the movement slowly for a time with a big D gracenote and the correct tachum sound will soon be heard. When you have learned it thoroughly you will be ready for:

INVERNESS RANT – Second Measure



By now you should be able to read the tune easily without any help, so do that first. We play the bar marked 1st the first time through and the bar marked 2nd on the repeat. The particular points to notice are:

Bar 1: Play the doublings carefully. Make sure there are no crossing noises. Be sure to lift the little finger for the high A. Rest on the D, and also on the two Fs and the high A.

Bar 2: This is where the tachum appears. Be sure to separate the two G gracenotes in double F, and the G and F gracenotes in the double Es.

Bar 4: Double E is followed by the grip on E.

Bar 7: The little run is similar to that in bar 4 of the first measure.

This now completes your first strathspey and you should practise it slowly and carefully (as usual), not forgetting to keep revising your earlier tunes. Always keep in mind that accuracy is important, whereas speed doesn't matter at all.

LESSON 24 ♣

STRIKES ON B AND C

The strike on B appears in the next tune, so we will try it first.



As you see, it consists of two Bs separated by a low G gracenote. To do this:

- 1 Play B, then
- 2 Strike the chanter holes lightly with the two raised fingers so that a little low G is heard before the second B

Try this over several times, and then try also the strike on C:



Be careful each time that the striking fingers are kept level and arrive on the chanter at the same time. You should now be able to start the next tune, a reel.

THE PIPER OF DRUMMOND – First Measure

reel



As usual read the measure aloud to make sure that you understand what is required, and then try each bar slowly. Be careful of the D throws, and note that the B strike appears in the second bar. In the fourth bar note also that the E gracenote separates two Ds, and be sure to rest slightly on the first of the three low As at the end.

Although the B strike is the only thing which is new in this tune, don't become too confident and start rushing it. This is a good opportunity to find out whether or not you have laid the foundations of your piping properly. Listen carefully as you play the measure slowly.

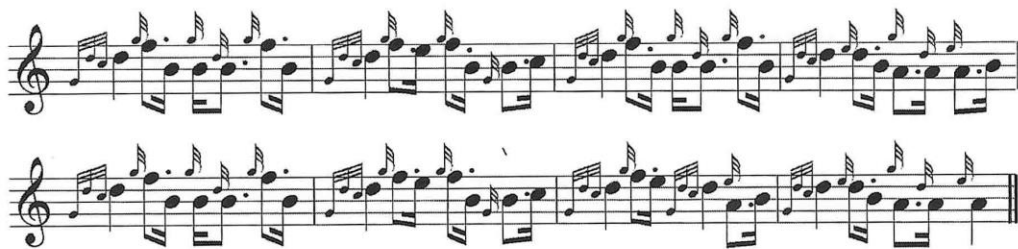
- Are you sounding the first low G in the D throw?
- Are you holding the chanter gently though firmly?
- Are all your fingers straight, but not stiff, at all times?
- Are you making all your crossings cleanly without any wrong noises?

If the answer to all these is 'yes', you are going to be a competent piper.

LESSON 25

The second part of the *Piper of Drummond* contains no new movements, so whenever you feel you can play the first measure reasonably well, you are ready to try the rest of the tune.

THE PIPER OF DRUMMOND – Second Measure



Again, begin by reading the part aloud. This is about the easiest lesson in the book, for there is only one new bar, the first. In fact, this tune again demonstrates how easy piping is when a whole tune of 16 bars can be constructed out of only four different ones.

The only thing you have to watch, particularly in the new bar, the first, is the last F. There is a tendency among beginners to forget to put the B finger down for this note. After you have played through the measure a few times you will become very aware of two Bs, one before and one after this F, and the lazy habit of leaving the B finger off tends to develop. The difference in the sound produced can hardly be detected, but it would be very obvious when you come to play the tune on the pipes, so guard against false fingering, as this is called.

Now write this measure into your book, and continue to practise it and your other tunes from your own copy.

LESSON 26

The next tune is a 'Retreat'. It belongs to the class of music often played at the end of the soldiers' day in Scottish regiments of the British Army. Nowadays retreats are popular with soloists and bands – civilian and military – all over the world. They are usually very beautiful melodies with an instant appeal, even for the non-piper. They are often written in 3/4 time and are played at a steady marching pace.

Some of the movements require a little explanation before you start.



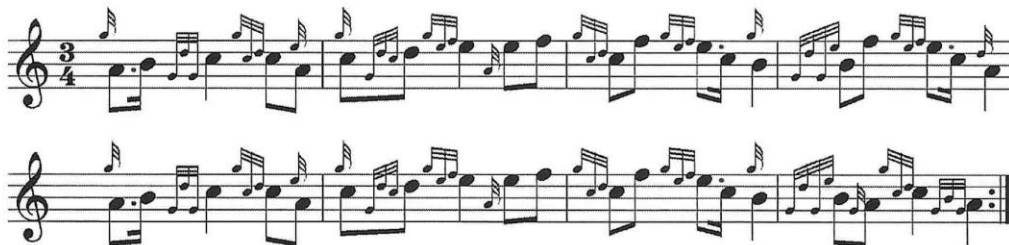
This change from C to low A with low G, B, and low G gracenotes occurs quite often and should be given special attention. To do it:

- 1 Play C
- 2 Play low G
- 3 Make a big B gracenote still on low G
- 4 Play low A

The important point is to sound the second low G clearly. Be sure that the little finger remains on the chanter until after the B finger returns. Practise the movement very slowly, and then try:

THE GREEN HILLS OF TYROL – First Measure

retreat march



2. Double D. This is written:

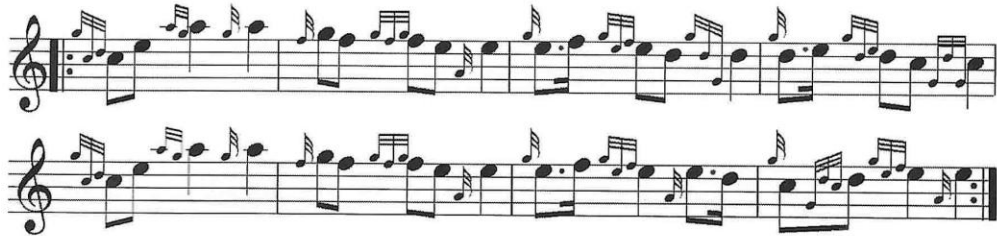


and consists of G and E gracenotes on D.

Practise it slowly and from every note on the scale making sure that you separate the two gracenotes and make them big and distinct.

Now try:

THE GREEN HILLS OF TYROL – Second Measure



Points to watch are:

Bar 1: The high G grace note between the two high As is produced by simply brushing the thumb against the high A hole.

Bar 2: The F grace note between the second high A of bar 1 and the high G of bar 2 is made by playing a very quick F between the two notes.

THEORY SUMMARY

TIME SIGNATURES

These are either Simple or Compound Time.

They tell us how many beats in the bar we have and the value of one beat.

2/4 is Simple Time; 6/8 is Compound Time; both get two beats in the bar.

3/4 is Simple and 9/8 Compound Time; both get three beats in the bar.

4/4 is Simple and 12/8 is Compound Time; both get four beats in the bar.

The value of a beat in Simple Time is one quarter note, a crotchet.

The value of a beat in Compound Time is dotted quarter note, a dotted crochet.

RHYTHM

Rhythm is the recurrence of strong and weak accents.

The metric accent in 2/4: 'strong and weak'.

The metric accent in 6/8: 'strong and weak'.

The metric accent in 3/4: 'strong, weak, weak'.

The metric accent in 9/8: 'strong, weak, weak'.

The metric accent in 4/4: 'strong, weak, medium, weak'.

The metric accent in 12/8: 'strong, weak, medium, weak'.

The first note in every bar gets a beat.

The rhythm count in bars of Simple Time is 'one, two ; one, two'.

The rhythm count in bars of Compound Time is 'one, two, three ; one, two, three'.

MUSIC

The three basic elements of music are melody, rhythm and harmony.

ADDITIONAL TUNES

ATHOLL HIGHLANDERS - march

Musical score for 'ATHOLL HIGHLANDERS - march'. The score is written in treble clef with a 6/8 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The melody is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, typical of a march. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The second and third staves continue the melody with various rhythmic patterns. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots.

AIKEN DRUM - march

Musical score for 'AIKEN DRUM - march'. The score is written in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The melody is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, typical of a march. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The second and third staves continue the melody with various rhythmic patterns. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots.

PIOBAIREACHD OF DONALD DUBH - march

The image displays a musical score for a march titled "PIOB Aireachd of Donald Dubh". The score is written in 6/8 time and consists of eight staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The music is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, typical of a march. The score includes various musical notations such as stems, beams, and note heads, along with repeat signs and a final double bar line. The overall structure is a single melodic line, likely intended for a piper.

BLUE BONNETS - march

The image displays a musical score for a march titled "Blue Bonnets". The score is written on eight staves, each using a treble clef. The time signature is 6/8, indicated by the '6' over the '8' at the beginning of the first staff. The music is characterized by a steady, rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, typical of a march. The melody is primarily composed of eighth notes, with some sixteenth-note runs. The score includes repeat signs (double bar lines with dots) at the beginning of the third, fifth, sixth, and seventh staves, indicating repeated rhythmic or melodic phrases. The overall style is that of a traditional march, with a clear and consistent rhythmic structure.

Strikes



Doublings – practise every doubling from every note on the scale



Grips and tachums



Grips



Birls – practise birls from every note on the chanter



Taorluaths – practise taorluaths on every note



POSTURE

- *Keep the back straight – make sure you use a chair which gives support – try not to slouch (see pics. 3 & 4).*
- *Keep the practice chanter in the centre of the mouth and as near perpendicular as possible – not outwards; think of the angle you play your pipe chanter (angled in towards the body and you will realise why (pics. 3 & 4 again)).*
- *Keep the elbows in and the wrists in a neutral position – straight. From elbow to knuckle there should be no bend. Ligaments and tendons which do not have to go round corners work much better. Fingers are kept straight. The first picture gives a bird's eye view of the ideal wrist posture. The second picture shows perfect finger positioning and posture.*

Instructors should be vigilant in assuring that their charges adhere to the above. Do not let pupils slouch or sprawl over a table (pic 3). Do not allow chanters to rest on a table. This encourages the worst possible posture habits. Pupils should keep chanters 'in the air' not resting on anything. Move chairs back and use a table for music – nothing else (pic 4). Instructors must position themselves to see the pupil's fingers. Do not compromise his/her posture so that you can get a better view.



FINAL THOUGHTS

You should now have reached a fairly good standard of playing and be able to learn quite quickly any of the simpler tunes for the bagpipe. In a short time, when you have had an opportunity to practise all your tunes and absorb all the information in these lessons, you will be ready to prepare yourself for the more difficult pieces and, in particular, for ceol mor, or piobaireachd. These, however, are beyond the scope of this book.

The tunes which followed the lessons are a selection of the type of music which is now well within your grasp. You will find them enjoyable to play as well as useful exercises in interpretation. None of them contains any new movements, but in Atholl Highlanders great care should be taken in going from C to A with a D gracenote and in going from A to C with a D gracenote. These two movements are difficult, with the risk of false notes or crossing noises. Hear how they should be played in the accompanying audio samples.

Finally, congratulations on your hard work and diligence in learning to play the great Highland bagpipe. Your efforts will be rewarded in years of real pleasure for both yourself and your listeners. It is now time to move on to College of Piping Tutors 2, 3, 4 (Piobaireachd), and the Essential Tunes collection. And we repeat our advice: keep honing your technique by practising every day.

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