

the only one in the public domain) and that it had better go into Special Collections. Years later I found it casually in the general shelves, in a mutilated condition. Two or three tunes had been cut from it with a razor by some clown. It would have been a lot safer with me, but I didn't know that I would be staying in Scotland—seemed unlikely at the time—and I wanted the book to stay in the country. Safe hands, I thought.

X In the early 1970s the English reprint company, EP of Wakefield in Yorkshire, responding to the expansion of the higher education sector and the demand by lots of new libraries for copies of classic texts, started bringing out the great old collections of bagpipe music at affordable prices. Photographic reproductions, so you were getting exactly the original. I think they began with Donald MacDonald. I showed this to Bob Nicol and asked would he support me if wrote to them suggesting further titles. On his advice they brought out Uilleam Ross, Angus MacKay, Donald MacPhee, and for me the greatest prize of all, General Thomason's *Ceol Mor*. They stopped before we could get to David Glen. Suddenly you could have copies of the core volumes of the historic repertoire of your very own, no strings, no library regulations, no fines and endless renewals of loan, and I began to play my way through them, especially *Ceol Mor*. I played twice through it end to end, making notes as I went.

This was inspired by curiosity, which had led me to the music in the first place, but also by repeated warnings from Bob Nicol about the inadequacies of the Piobaireachd Society volumes. Time and again he would say during lessons 'something's wrong; something's shifted; they've written it down all wrong', and proceed to emend their scores as he sang and played on his practice chanter. He was scathingly dismissive of the Society's editor, Archibald Campbell, whom he dismissed as 'no musician'; and a 'rank amateur' as a player. As I played these old scores after Bob died, no longer playing borrowed pipes, but my own set of old ebony and ivory Henderson's with a decent Hardie chanter from Bert Barron who was a great man for old pipes in those days (he taught Jack Taylor), I made detailed comparisons with the Piobaireachd Society scores. One thing was quickly obvious, namely, that when the editor said a tune was taken from Angus MacKay, it very seldom was. There were all kinds of changes to time and note values in the grounds, usually not commented on in the accompanying notes. So if you played these scores thinking you were following tradition, you were way off beam.

I didn't like the prevailing style of piobaireachd playing you heard at the competitions anyway—which, apart from the radio repeating the mixture as before, was the only way to hear the music publicly performed—it seemed to me desperately slow and laborious, and there was something very odd about the timing of the grounds, they didn't seem to belong to the same musical world as the variations. You became quickly aware of this as a student of the Bobs—they would reach the variations and say 'well, it's plain sailing after that'. The variations were flowing and often sweetly musical and had a grand underlying rhythmical pulse. But the all-important grounds of the tunes, were different, and to be treated differently. They didn't make the same kind of obvious musical sense, and you had to find a teacher who could unfathom them, and take you through them note by note in the 'hold this; cut that' style we're all familiar with. Only then could you call yourself a finished player. Indeed, as is well known, some very famous players, cream of the profession, have positively disliked piobaireachd, and the way it's generally