

Roderick Cannon's  
*A Bibliography of Bagpipe Music*

John Donald Publishers Ltd  
Edinburgh 1980

An update by Geoff Hore  
2008

The writing in **black font** is from *A Bibliography of Bagpipe Music*. The update comments are in **blue font**.

If anyone has any information that can assist in adding to this update please contact the writer at [geoff.hore@xtra.co.nz](mailto:geoff.hore@xtra.co.nz).

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**326 Ceol Mor Notation** by C S Thomason.

This famous and rare book was well researched in the original *Bibliography* but since then a number of previously unknown copies have been located. This has resulted in a more accurate picture of the publication history and in 2003 Cannon was able to completely re-write this chapter and the results have been published in <http://www.piobaireachd.co.uk/>.

To enable the reader to get an understanding of the 'before and after' situation, the chapter from the original *Bibliography* is reproduced here.

The present writer has seen this book in private collections in New Zealand but has not had the opportunity to inspect them in detail. In his own collection he has three small booklets and the EP (1975) version. One of the small booklets may be the 'pioneer pamphlet' that Thomason referred to. This is explained in detail at the end.

The first complete version of 'Ceol Mor' appeared in 1900, but there were two editions at least before that date.

Manson (1900, p 110) writes that a limited edition of 50 copies only was printed for private circulation in 1896. The introduction to edition IV below (pp [i], ii-xi), which is dated 1893, seems to be a description of some such preliminary work. It may well have been reproduced without alteration. Thus on page xi Thomason writes, 'my introduction ... must do duty for the description of the new notation with a few Example Piobaireachdan from the Ceol Mor Collection, as well as for "Ceol Mor" itself, of which the description is only a precursor,' and on page xi, 'the critical and historical notes I must reserve for "Ceol Mor" itself, the time of appearance of which must depend a good deal on the reception afforded to my pioneer pamphlet. The list of tunes which I have collected for the complete book will give ... an idea of the material. . .'

It seems clear that the 'collection' (whether Published or not) was still being added to at the time this introduction was written, since in the course of a discussion of metre in piobaireachd (p ix of the introduction to IV) the number of tunes analysed is given as 173, while the table on p xiv of IV gives the total as 278.

There is a reproduction of a title-page, on p [xv] of edition V below, which may well be the title of the 'pioneer pamphlet' referred to. It runs as follows:

Ceol Mor notation. / A new and abbreviated system / of / musical notation / for the / piobaireachd / as played on the Highland bagpipe, / with examples. / By Major-General C. S. Thomason, R.E., (Bengal). / Dehra Dun. / 1893.

The copy of edition IV in the Cambridge University Library (which copy was evidently issued in 1905) has an advertisement describing three editions of different sizes, on sale at the same time:

Ceol Mor [:] 275 pibrochs, arranged line by line as poetry, for the Great Highland Bagpipe, in a new and easily acquired abbreviated notation, classifying the Pipe turns occurring in Pibroch music. Compiled from numerous quoted authorities and edited by Major-General C. S. Thomason, late R.E., Bengal,

Complete in one handy volume	net £2 - 2s.
Notation and first 9 pibrochs of above	2s.
Notation and first 50 pibrochs of above	10s.

Sold by - S. Sidders & Co. 17 & 19 Ball St. Kensington London W.

Special terms for complete book accorded to professional pibroch players and pipers of British Regiments, including Auxiliary Forces.

In 1897 the main publication began to appear in a series of fascicules, an example of which is described as 'edition' II below.

II c1897

Ceol Mor: / written in / a new and abbreviated system of musical notation / for the / piobaireachd, / as played on the Highland bagpipe. / Part III. – Containing 18 tunes. / Collected and edited / by Major General C. S. Thomason, R. E., (Bengal.) /

John MacKay, 'Celtic Monthly' Office, 9 Blythswood Drive, Glasgow. / 1897. / Price, four shillings /

[Outside front cover], title; [inside front], contents; pp 49-80, pibrochs (18); [inside back cover] blank; [outside back], advertisement.

Roderick Cannon's Collection.\*

Paper covers. 5.3 x 8.5".

[The Author's Collection.](#)

[Donated by Roderick Cannon September 2006.](#)

In the *Celtic Monthly*, February 1897, it was announced that Part I of this collection would be in the hands of subscribers in a few days, and 'thereafter the various parts will be issued on the first of each month'. There were to be 13 parts, priced 4s. each. In the March 1897 issue it was announced that 'Ceol Mor. Part I has been sent to all subscribers and Part II will be ready in a few days.' I have scanned the journal carefully for references to subsequent parts, but without success.

A copy of part II (in a private collection) has the same title-page as this except for the part number and the number of tunes, 32. ([The present writer has an original of this book \(donated by Roderick Cannon\) and it has 23 tunes both on the title-page and in the book. The number 32 may be a typographical error.](#))

III ND

The index of the 1900 edition is printed as an appendix to Manson's book (1901, pp 393-399). It lists 277 tunes.

IV ND

*Title and imprint same as V, below, including date, 1900.*

title; p [1], 'Corrections and additions to music in first edition "Ceol Mor"'. (up to June, 1902); p [2], a note on 'corrected leaves for Ceol Mor. (1st edition)'; p [3], 'Echoes, doubled echoes and trebled echoes'; p [4], music illustrating page [3]; pp [i], ii-xi, introduction; p [xii], 'Explanations of Keys to Abbreviations';

[unnumbered], Plates I-VI; pp [1], 2-13, [14], as V; pp [i], ii-xiv, index; pp 1-400, pibrochs (282); pp [1-5], 'Editor's Postscript to First Edition "Ceol Mor"'; p [6] blank.  
*Plates:* Portraits, 2 leaves between pp [14] and [i]. The title-page is also a plate as in V.

University Library, Cambridge.

Received 23 January 1905.

Mitchell Library, Glasgow.\*

4.7 x 8.1".

British Library, London.\*

4.6 x 7.8". Received 20 January 1905.

Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Although the title-page is dated 1900, this is evidently a later edition. The price is given as 42s in advertisements of 1905 and c. 1911.

The index lists 279 tunes, and assigns Roman numerals to all except one; but the numerals do not appear in the text. The unnumbered tune is 'We Will Take the Highway' which appears at p 376. The tunes immediately before and after this one are numbered cclviii and cclix in the index.

The following pages are starred: 29, 33, 34, 44, 45, 55, 56, 57, 65, 105, 106, 113, 114, 125, 132, 140, 160, 165, 181, 195 (actually marked with a cross), 219, 231, 245, 255, 265, 291, 309, 310, 382, 383, 385. The following are marked with two stars: 40, 41, 69, 70, 154, 327.

V c1900-10

A collection of / piobaireachd, / as played on the great Highland bagpipes. / Ceol Mor. / Compiled, edited and rendered in a new and easily acquired notation / by Major-General C. S. Thomason, R.E. (Bengal). /

Published by C. S. Thomason, c/o. S. Sidders & Co., 17 & 19, Ball Street, Kensington, London. W. / A.D.1900. /

*Below the imprint hand-stamped:* Entered at Stationers Hall

title; pp [i], ii-xi, introduction; p[xii] blank; p [xiii], sub-title, 'Plates I-VI, Explanatory of Ceol Mor Notation.'; p [xiv], 'Explanations of Keys to Abbreviations'; p [xv], another title (see above); p [xvi] blank; pp [1], 2-13, 'Ceol Mor Notation', an explanation in 53 numbered sections, followed by 'Capital Letters used as Abbreviations'; p [14] blank; pp [i, ii], iii-xiv, index; [six unnumbered leaves printed verso only and called Plates I-VII, 'Key to the Abbreviations used in Ceol Mor'; pp 1-400, pibrochs (282); pp [401-402], 'A few concluding remarks by the Editor'; p [403], a further note, untitled; p [404] blank.

*Plates:* Portraits, 2 leaves, between pp [14] and [i]. The title-page is also an inserted plate.

National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.\*

Leather binding. One fly-leaf at each end. 4.7 x 8.1". Received 19 October 1910.

As stated above, the extra title on p [xv] is dated 1893, and the introduction, signed 'C. S. Thomason, East Laggan, Naini Tal, East Indies', is dated September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1893. The 'Concluding Remarks' are dated July 15, 1898, and the note on p [403] is dated June 21 1900.

The page which I have called [403] is actually numbered xvli, but this has been partly obliterated with ink. Page iii of the index is misprinted 'ii'.

The following page numbers are starred: 3-4, 29, 33-34, 40, 41, 43-44, 45, 48, 54, 56, 57, 69-70, 80, 81, 105-106, 112, 113-114, 125, 127, 129, 132, 140, 154, 160, 165, 181, 195, 198, 206, 216, 217, 219, 231, 244, 245, 255, 257, 261, 265, 291, 308, 309-310, 327, 347, 374, 381-382, 383, 385, 387, 394.

VI 1975

Ceol Mor Notation. / A new and abbreviated system / of / musical notation for the / piobaireachd / as played on the Highland bagpipe, with examples. / By Major-General C. S. Thomason, R.E., (Bengal). /

E P Publishing Limited / British Book Centre, Inc. / 1975

*The wrapper has the title; Ceol Mor / a new and abbreviated system / of musical notation for the Piobaireachd / as played on the Highland bagpipe / Major General C. S. Thomason, R.E.*

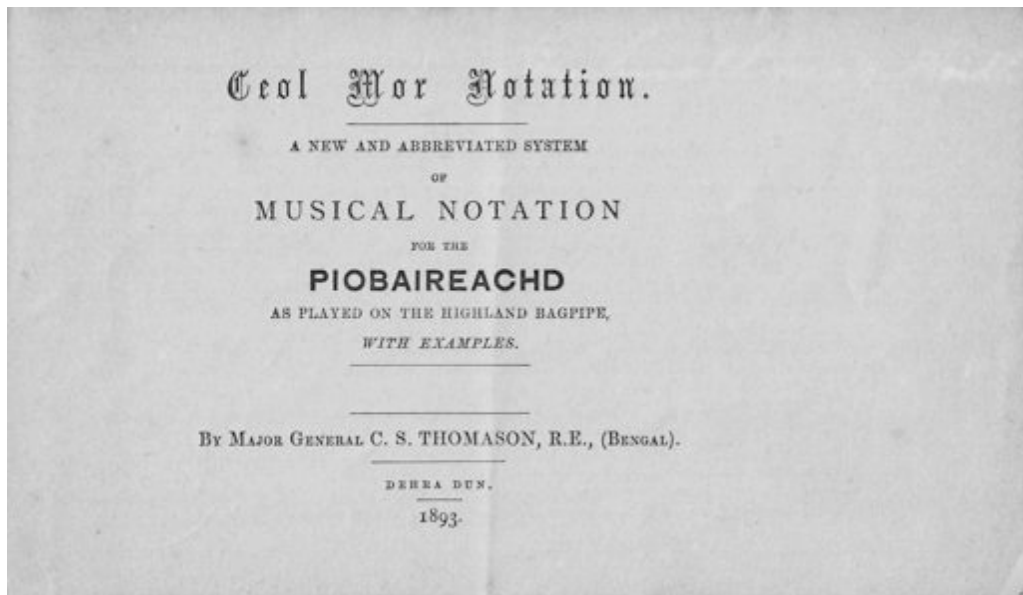
p [i], half-title, 'Ceol Mor Notation'; p [3], title; p [4], copyrights, colophon, etc; pp [5-10], introduction, comprising pages numbered [i], ii-xi; pp [1]-171, 'Ceol Mor Notation', comprising pages numbered 1-13; pp [18-20], 'Key to abbreviations used in Ceol Mor', comprising plates I-VI; pp [21-23], pibrochs (4) on plates numbered 1-6; p [24] blank; p [25], preface; pp [26-30], 'Revised Ceol Mor Notation, 1905', comprising pages numbered [3], 4-14; p [30], 'Analysis of metres' (a page numbered 15), and 'Postscript regarding "Ceol Mor" shakes' (a page unnumbered); pp [31-33], 'Key to abbreviations used in Ceol Mor', comprising plates I-V; p [34] blank; pp [35-37], 'Ceol Mor. Rhythm in Sections', comprising pages numbered [1], 2-4, [5]; p [38], 'Errata in "Ceol Mor" first edition', and 'Errata dated 1905 in first edition "Ceol Mor" dated 1900'; pp [39-270], music, comprising pages numbered 1-3, \*3, 4, \*4, 5-29, \*29, 30-33, \*33, 34, \*34, 35-40, \*40, 41, \*41, 42, 42, 43, -43, 44, \*44, 45, \*45, 46-48, \*48, 49-54, \*54, 55, 55, 56, \*56, 57, \*57, 58-66, 65, 66, 67-69, \*69, 70, \*70, 71-80, \*80, 81, \*81, 82-105, \*105, 106, \*106, 107-112, \*112, 113, \*113, 114, \*114, 115-125, \*125, 126, 127, \*127, 128, 129, \*129, 130-132, \*132, 133-140, \*140, 141-154, \*154, 155-160, \*160, 161-165, \*165, 166-181, \*181, 182-195, \*195, 196-198, \*198, 199-206, \*206, 207 216, \*216, 217, \*217, 218, 219, \*219, 220-231, \*231, 232 2,44, \*244, 245, \*245, 246-255, \*255, 256, 257, \*257, 258, \*258, 259-261, \*261, 262-265, \*265, 266-291, \*291, 292-307, 307, 308, \*308, 309, \*309, 310, \*310, 311-327, \*327, 328-347, \*347, 348-374, \*374, 375-381, \*381, 382, \*382, 383, \*383, 384, 385, \*385, 386, 387, \*387, 388-394, \*394, 395-400; pp [271-278], 'Index of Ceol Mor, Revised in 1905', comprising pages numbered [i], ii-x, xa, xi-xiv.

Cloth, boards. 10.0 x 8.2”.

[The Author's Collection.](#)

This is a facsimile reprint from two of the earlier editions. Each page of the reprint contains two pages of the original, full size. According to a note on p [4], 'The publishers have included both versions of pages where the second edition varied from the first edition. Most of these were indicated by an asterisk but in several cases this was not so.'

The present writer has a booklet that may be the pioneer pamphlet. As can be seen from the image below the title is identical to that described by Cannon in paragraph 4 above. When the updated version in <http://www.piobaireachd.co.uk/> was published he had still not located the pioneer pamphlet.



p [i], title; p [ii], blank; p [iii], Explanations of Keys to Abbreviations; p [iv], blank; pp [v, vii, ix, xi, xiii, xiv], Plates I-VI; (The verso sides of these pages are blank); p [1], 2-13, Ceol Mor Notation, Grace Notes; p 14, blank; pp [15-16], Postscript to Ceol Mor Notation.

On the front cover is the signature 'Domhnall MacAoidh' (Donald MacKay) and it is tempting to link this book to the Donald MacKay who assisted Thomason. MacKay was a nephew of Angus MacKay.

However MacKay died in 1892 or 1893. The writer has seen both dates in various publications and has not been able to ascertain precisely his date of death. If he died in 1893 then it is quite likely the booklet belonged to him. If it was the year earlier then it becomes a little more difficult to attribute the book to him.

The dimensions of the book are 205 mm X 111 mm. In its original form it was saddle stitched with one staple through the spine. At some time a single sheet with the Postscript dated 1903 has been inserted at the end and the book has then been side stitched with two staples. The paper the Postscript is printed on is a darker colour than the rest of the book. There are no watermarks.

The Postscript was issued as a result of the Scottish Piobaireachd Society setting the scores of six tunes for the competitions in 1904. It appears that these tunes were chosen from Ceol Mor and Thomason felt it prudent to issue the Postscript to 'furnish intending competitors with the description of this new Notation.' The owner of the book at that time had it inserted and the book re-stapled.

In the article by Cannon in the Piobaireachd Society's website (<http://www.piobaireachd.co.uk/>) Item 7, The 1903 Pamphlet, may be a reproduction of the one being discussed here. It may also be the same book that the writer has and had the same treatment but not as easily identifiable.

Rev 00.