

# The harmonic grounds of *ceòl beag*

by Barnaby Brown — a handout for RSAMD BEd III, 15 October 2009

The archetypes of double-tonic craft are well-known to the harmony players who accompany Scottish traditional music, but largely unknown to melody players and the wider musical establishment. This survey identifies the patterns most appropriate for use in educational contexts today, with the ultimate goal of giving teachers greater confidence handling one of the most vital and widely noted but poorly documented characteristics of Scottish music.

Five contrasting sources were analysed so that the results might offer some perspective on how the popularity of these grounds has changed over time, and the extent to which they are shared by neighbouring cultures. For the last 300 years, at least, the following have been the most popular, most stable and most distinctive patterns in *ceòl beag*.

The harmonic grounds of <i>ceòl beag</i>	<i>Worlds CD vol. 1 2008</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Dunlay &amp; Greenberg 1996</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Patrick McDonald 1784</i> <sup>3</sup>	<i>William Dixon c.1735</i> <sup>4</sup>	<i>John Playford 1651</i> <sup>5</sup>
<b>1100 1101</b> <i>variant 1110 1101 : 1100 1101</i>	28% 17 3	37% 37 6	31% 9 1	10% 3 1	2% 2 0
<b>1110 11101</b> <i>variant 1110 1111</i>	19% 10 4	18% 18 3	3% 0 1	3% 0 1	3% 3 0
<b>1110 1100</b> <i>variant 1110 11010</i>	14% 10 0	10% 10 1	16% 2 3	43% 7 10	1% 1 0
<b>1111 1100</b> <i>in diminution 1110 1110</i>	10% 3 4	10% 9 3	22% 3 4	18% 7 0	1% 1 0
<b>1011 1011</b> <i>in augmentation 1100 1111</i>	4% 2 1	10% 6 5	13% 3 1	23% 6 3	9% 9 0
<b>0011 0011</b>	6% 4	1% 1	0	3% 1	8% 8
<b>1010 10101</b>	3% 2	4% 5	9% 3	0	4% 4
other double-tonic pattern	7% 5	2% 2	3% 1	0	15% 16
no double-tonic pattern	10% 7	8% 9	3% 1	3% 1	58% 61
<i>no. of tunes analysed</i>	72	115	32	40	105

<sup>1</sup> *World Pipe Band Championships 2008*, vol. 1 (Monarch CDMON 876).

<sup>2</sup> Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg, *Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton* (DunGreen Music, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> 'North Highland Reels or Country Dances' in Patrick McDonald's *Collection of Highland Vocal Airs* (1784). For Roderick Cannon's notes, see *The Patrick McDonald Collection* (Taigh na Teud, 2000) 74–75.

<sup>4</sup> Manuscript tune book (1733–38) by William Dixon, a toun piper from Fenwick, near Stamfordham, Northumberland. Edited by Matt Seattle, *The Master Piper* (Dragonfly Music, 1995, revised 2002).

<sup>5</sup> John Playford, *The English Dancing Master*, London, 1651. Edited by Jeremy Barlow, *The Complete Country Dance Tunes from Playford's Dancing Master* (Faber Music, 1985).