

# The Piper to the Laird of Grant

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## ABSTRACT

*The early 18th-century portrait in oils of the Piper to the Laird of Grant was acquired by the National Museums of Scotland as an exceptional document of social and cultural history. This paper examines the evidence for its original production, the identity of the subject, and the historical context of the Highland society of the 17th and early 18th centuries in which it was conceived.*

Paintings and portraits are essentially not the stock-in-trade of the National Museums of Scotland but are pre-eminently the province of the National Galleries of Scotland. Exceptions are made, however, when the opportunity arises, to acquire paintings and portraits for the national collections as documents of social history or material culture. One of the most successful acquisitions in this genre of recent years has been the *Piper to the Laird of Grant* (NMS OD 69).

The portrait (illus 1), in oil on canvas, measuring 2.13 m by 1.54 m, is signed and dated: 'Ric Waitt ad vivum Pinxit 1714'. It shows a figure, in contemporary Highland dress, playing the Highland bagpipe, with a *bratach* or banner flying from the drones emblazoned with a coat of arms and the motto *Standfast*; in the background is a representation of Castle Grant. A title on the lower left-hand edge, probably added later, reads: 'Piper To The Laird of Grant'.

This painting belongs to a notable series of portraits, painted between 1713 and 1726, of the Lairds of Grant and their immediate family, some of their more distant relatives, the Grant cadet families, tacksmen, local leading men of the name, and conspicuous and prestigious figures of the traditional retinue of the clan chieftain. Richard Waitt, the artist, was first employed in 1713 when he painted Colonel Alexander Grant of Grant and his brother, and Donald Grant of Glenbeg; in the following year he painted another of the Laird's brothers and his sister, and went on to paint a group of leading kinsmen, the hereditary standard-bearer, Patrick Grant of Miltown, the 'Champion', Alasdair Grant Mor, and the Piper. At the end of the series, he painted the Henwife of Castle Grant in 1726, an unidealized portrait of a senior servant of the household and, as such, another extraordinary image of Scottish art. The subject matter and the composition of the Champion and the Piper are closely comparable and they must have been intended as companion-pieces; it is noteworthy that Waitt was paid £5 a piece for these two paintings, in contrast to the family portraits (head and shoulders) which cost about a guinea each (Holloway 1989, 71 & 82).

The quality of Waitt's paintings as works of art has been called into question but it is not the purpose of this essay to consider the *Piper to the Laird of Grant* and the other Grant portraits against aesthetic criteria. Their merit and value for our purposes lie in their providing a form of

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documentation of Highland society, and in the (apparently unique) status of the portraits of Clan Grant as a group. Nowhere else in Scotland, or even in Europe, was there a similar gallery of a clan, of the chieftain, kin and retainers, providing an extraordinary insight into the mores of Highland society and its own peculiar form of feudal landownership adulterated with aboriginal Celtic imperatives of name and kinship. The vision of this society is all the more important because of its subsequent rapid eclipse in the aftermath of the Jacobite Wars and the far-reaching effects of measures such as the abolition in 1747 of the Heritable Jurisdictions which had conferred a quasi-regal jurisdiction on the chief of Clan Grant.

At the sale of the contents of Cullen House, Banffshire, in 1975, the National Museum of Antiquities purchased a pair of portraits by David Scougal, of 1658: the Laird of Grant, James Grant of Freuchie, and his wife, Lady Mary Stewart. The following year (1976), the National Museum purchased by private treaty sale the *Piper to the Laird of Grant*, adding the painting to the national collections as an unusual document of Highland society and of its material culture (such as dress and accoutrements). There was much in the Clan Grant head houses to interest the National Museum. The government's acceptance of the Castle Grant armoury in lieu of estate duty in 1977 brought the National Museum a significant share of a 'gun-cage' of weapons and accoutrements. This included 13 Highland long guns of 17th-century date, a further group of early long guns, pistols, broadswords, targes, armour, saddle graith and other items. These were customarily distributed to the retainers of the clan chief for the periodical 'wappenshaws' or reviews of the men under arms in a district or lordship. The status of regality enjoyed by the Laird of Grant conferred rights that were almost royal in their jurisdiction, such as calling out his vassals, retainers and fencible men for 'hosting and hunteing', as prescribed in the Regality Court Books in the opening years of the 18th century. Such an occasion was so graphically described by Scott as part of the *mise-en-scène* of *Old Mortality*:

... when the feudal array of the county was called out, and each crown vassal was required to appear with such muster of men and armour as he was bound to make by his fief and that under high statutory penalties (Scott 1893, 17).

The force of such feudal imperatives may seem out of place in a kin and clan so far north of the Highland line. The fact that the Grants, together with the Frasers and the Chisholms, were families of Norman-French origin, and incomers at a comparatively late date in the Highlands, did not seem to lessen the extent to which they had become Gaelicized, nor their cohesiveness as a clan.

But even the most Gaelic of Highland families had come to depend for security on feudal provisions such as title by charter to land and privileges. The status of Clan Grant had recently been advanced considerably by a charter from the Crown in 1694 erecting the Grant lands of Freuchie into a Regality and changing the chief's designation from the Laird of Freuchie to the Laird of Grant; this gives added meaning to the portrait's title, *Piper to the Laird of Grant* (Fraser 1883, III, 476).

Clearly the periodic muster of fencible men stiffened loyalty and dependency in a period when both were frequently tested in the Highlands. Entries for 1704 in the Regality Court Books of the Laird of Grant record the calling out, on 48 hours' notice, of the 'fencible men' of Badenoch and Strathspey for the Laird's 'hosting or hunteing'; each man was to be dressed in 'Heighland coates, trewes, and short hoes of tartane of red and greine sett broad springed and also with gun, sword, pistoll and durk ... And the Master to outrig the servantes in the saids coates, trewes, and hose out of there fies' (Stewart 1893, 27-8).



ILLUS 1 *Piper to the Laird of Grant* (1714) by Richard Waitt, oil on canvas, 2.13 m by 1.54 m (Courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland, OD 69)

A sense of kinship and identity must have been strengthened when Ludovick Grant of Freuchie made a settlement of his estates on his eldest son, Colonel Alexander Grant of Grant, in 1710; at a formal and elaborate ceremony the old laird resigned the leadership of the clan to his heir. This selection of the heir to the estate before the witness of the clan is reminiscent of the ‘tanistry’ of the early Irish law tracts by which the successor designate or heir presumptive, *an tanaiste*, was chosen within the ruler’s lifetime.

[The Laird of Grant] made all the gentlemen and commons of his name wear whiskers, and make all their plaids and tartan of red and green, and commanded them all to appear before him at Ballintome, the ordinary place of rendezvous, in that uniform, in kilt and under arms, which order was complied with (Fraser 1883, III, 326–7).

The Waitt portraits of Clan Grant reflect not only the feudal order of medieval Scotland but also an archaic, kin-based social order of Gaelic Scotland and Ireland. An analysis of the fragmentary evidence for the piper’s identity corroborates these impressions. The piper is nameless on his portrait, although his facial features are strongly depicted and impressive. The details writ large are his designated office of ‘Piper to the Laird of Grant’, his uniform of livery, the tartan, the heraldic banner, and the laird’s head house.

It is evident from the Waitt portrait series, as well as from documents, that the Lairds of Freuchie and Grant shared the custom of being attended by the traditional retinue of henchmen, poets and musicians. In the early 17th century, for example, there were harpers in the Laird’s household and they were described with the traditional Gaelic term *clarsair* (Fraser 1883, II, 66; Fraser 1883, III, 326). At the same time, and consistent with evidence from other areas of Gaelic society, the Lairds of Grant were including a piper in their household. John Grant of Glenmoriston, chamberlain and baron-bailie, wrote to the Laird of Grant in 1624 regarding the bringing to justice of the murderer of the Piper, Donald Cumming, described in the syntactic style of Gaelic as ‘your serwand Doull Pyper’ (Mackay 1893, 462). By the middle of the century the musician was piper and violer, uniting the skills in one practitioner. A Letter of Pension, dated 5 April 1653 by James Grant of Freuchie to his chamberlain, charges him to pay yearly to Alexander Cumming

his piper and violer, twenty merks Scots money out of the duties of the parish of Innerallan for the space of five years ... for which sum Alexander Cumming binds himself, by the faith and truth of his body, to give bodily service and attendance to James Grant ... at his command, when and as often as the same shall be required of him, he being always in health of body... (Fraser 1883, III, 462).

The piper, therefore, is bound to attend the chieftain and receives monetary payments.

Payments of salary as ‘pension’ to ‘Alister Cumming Pyper’ are mentioned in the Laird of Grant’s accounts from 1662 to 1664 and in 1686.<sup>1</sup> We may imagine that he attended the Gaelic obsequies in 1669 when Fraser of Foyers was conveyed in state across Loch Ness with, as the Wardlaw Manuscript poetically describes: ‘... many Grants, Cummings, Frasers ... in four great boats, trumpets sounding, pipers playing, with echoes rebounding’ (Mackay 1905, 484).

In 1703 Ludovick Grant, the Laird, directed Robert Grant, the Factor, to pay 20 merks Scots to ‘Alister Cumming in Glenbeg as his salary for being my pyper’.<sup>2</sup> This is 50 years after the first reference to Alexander Cumming as piper and violer, and here the piper of the same name is distinguished by a territorial designation. It is suggested that Alister Cumming in Glenbeg was a son of Alexander Cumming, the piper, and not the same man. Parish registers for Cromdale,

Inverallan and Advie record the baptism of two children to Janet Grant and William Cumming, piper in Glenbeg, in February 1705 and July 1710, suggesting that William Cumming, the subject of the Waitt portrait, was married at some time (unrecorded) before 1705.<sup>3</sup> Extrapolating from known dates and the image of the portrait, it is suggested that he was born about 1687.

The earliest payments of salary to William Cumming date to 1711, and they continue regularly until 1722. Within this period also, Richard Waitt submitted his account for the piper's portrait and dated it 8 January 1715: 'For William Cummine his picture at full length 05.00.00'.<sup>4</sup> Payment from the Factor's Crop account for 1724 is recorded in the following terms: 'By Cash allowed Wm Cummings relict as a years sallary for her Deceast husband being pipper to the Ld of Grant 26.13.4'.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that the Piper to the Laird of Grant, born c 1687, died perhaps in late 1723, aged about 36 or 37.

The piper's tack was sustained by his relict, Janet Grant, and her son, Donald Cumming, as recorded in a Judicial Rental for Strathspey of 1742.<sup>6</sup> The role of Piper to the Laird of Grant devolved on Donald's younger sibling, John, whose birth is recorded on 15 July 1710, and a first payment of £26 13s 4d Scots was made on 4 January 1727 as a year's salary to Martinmas 1726, making him 15 when he first took up the role.<sup>7</sup> In turn, he was succeeded by his son, Angus Cumming, who became Piper to the Laird of Grant in Urquhart and signed a salary receipt in May 1744.<sup>8</sup> Angus Cumming is also distinguished for his posthumous publication in 1780 of *Collection of Strathspey, or Old Highland Reels*, and is credited along with the Browns of Kincardine as an originator of the 'Strathspey style'. He was subsequently described in these terms: 'The Publisher follows the profession of his forefathers who have been for many generations Musicians in Strathspey' (Glen 1891, x). James Logan, writing in 1831, makes a significant remark about the 'Cummings of Freuchie or Castle Grant': '... there was a hereditary succession of these musicians, the last of whom, John Roy Cumming, died between 1750 and 1760'. John *Ruadh* Cumming was said to have been a regular performer on the bellows-blown or Lowland bagpipe, and on the fiddle. 'His descendants in London inherited the musical genius of their ancestors and are known by many ingenious works in mechanics' (Logan 1876, 268). The so-called 'last of the hereditary succession' was probably not the John Cumming who was born in 1710 since his son Angus was still alive in 1773 when he received a salary from the Lairds of Grant as 'Musician to the Family'.<sup>9</sup> The line, however, appears to have continued. He, Angus, was father of John Cumming, piper to the 'Good Sir James' in the 1770s and early 1780s. John Cumming is listed among the competitors in the early piping competitions organized by the Highland Society of London and the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland in 1784 and 1785, playing successively 'The Finger-Lock' and 'The Prince's Salute' (*Scots Mag.* 1784, 552; Dalyell 1849, 282). Remarkably also, he was probably the same John Cumming who, in recognition of the pre-eminence traditionally accorded to the hereditary pipers of Skye, was sent as a lad by Sir James Grant of Grant to Skye in October 1774 'to be trained as a piper'. The two documents referring to this confirm that John was the son of Angus Cumming.<sup>10</sup>

Richard Waitt's portrait of the Piper sits nominally in the middle of this exceptional family of musicians - pipers, 'violers' and fiddlers - who served the Lairds of Grant hereditarily over about 170 years and probably at least seven, if not more, generations. There was, in this sense of a musical dynasty in the Gaelic tradition, no need to put a name to the face.

As hereditary musicians in Gaelic society, they inherited an archaic and possibly prehistoric tradition, but as pipers in an official position in the chief's retinue, they must be seen as relative newcomers. There is sufficient evidence to suppose that, in the medieval period, the bagpipe was the universal musical instrument of Europe and beyond that it may have been a relatively late arrival in the Highlands. Certainly, Richard Waitt's *Piper to the Laird of Grant* is the earliest clear

picture of a Highland bagpipe. It would be difficult to claim that it was unknown here before, say, the 15th century, but it should be emphasized that the tradition and status of piping as we understand its history today was not part of the more ancient Gaelic order. The respective status and also the social standing in Gaelic society of the learned orders and literati were well developed, well defined and perfectly understood in the medieval Highlands; the piper had no share in this. The musical instrument *par excellence* of this society was the harp.

By the 18th century, the harp or *clarsach* was a rarity and the office of harper in the households of clan chieftains almost unknown. The piper, by contrast, was widely recognized as the exponent of Gaelic instrumental music, had established families who held office hereditarily through successive generations, and had become in some instances tacksmen and 'gentlemen' of the clan (Burt 1876, 163).

There is probably no single explanation of this change. The 16th and 17th centuries were periods of more or less incessant warfare, referred to in Gaelic as *Linn nan Creach*, 'the Age of Forays', and were followed by large-scale involvement in the Montrose and Jacobite Wars and in the wider field of British politics. Warfare which had been small, set-piece engagements, and the preserve of the 'gentlemen' of the clan and picked warriors, now became battle in earnest requiring more manpower. The increase of the numbers of fighting men in the field rendered obsolete the formal bardic recitation of *brosnachadh catha* or 'incitement to battle' and the music of the harp. Something more strident was required to rally and arouse large armies and it seems to be no coincidence that the bagpipe should have come into prominence in the Highlands in this period.

The rise of the Highland bagpipe to prominence did not go unchallenged. There is a considerable corpus of satirical poetry in Gaelic by the antagonists and protagonists of the Highland bagpipe. The *di-moladh* and *moladh*, 'dispraise' and 'praise', of pipes and pipers, are recurrent notes in 17th-century poetry and song. For example, the 17th-century poet, Niall MacMhuirich, contemptuously denounced the music of the pipes as harsh and barbaric in a vicious satire *Seanchas na Pìob o Thus* (History of the Pipe from the Beginning of Time) and did not spare the player from his vituperation.

The bagpipe, as a late arrival, evolved in a promising ambience of the highly developed tradition of arts, music and letters and flourished in a way arguably more remarkable than in any of the other territories of its former colonization. This was due, on the one hand, to the rich tradition of music and song in Gaelic and, on the other, to the power of patronage. The most illustrious of the clan chieftains, such as the MacLeods of Dunvegan and the MacLeans of Duart, were those who maintained a 'court' of poets, bards, historians, and musicians. It is clear that the Lairds of Grant also provided this style of patronage. This enabled 'dynasties' of poets and musicians to sustain their art hereditarily. The best known of the piping dynasties were the MacCrimmons, the MacArthurs, the Rankins, the MacKays, the MacGregors of Glenlyon (*Clann an Sgeulaiche*) and, arguably, the Cummings.

The value added to this art in successive generations was the customary training. Bards and harpers had had to undergo a long and elaborate training, including a sojourn at the schools of poetry and music in Ireland. This practice declined when the political and cultural links between Ireland and Gaelic Scotland were severed decisively in the 17th century, and also the disposable resources of the clan chieftains no longer sustained this extravagance (eg Matheson 1970, lviii). The practice had been a standard expectation for harpers and was carried over to a limited extent for pipers, in so far as their patrons liked to send them away to schools of piping (Logan 1876, 289). The acknowledged pre-eminence of the MacCrimmons of Skye drew pipers for instruction from all over the Highlands and Islands, and it is no surprise in piping tradition to find the 'Good Sir James' Grant of Grant writing to Skye in October 1774 'anent young Cumming, to be trained

as piper'. The role and status of the piper is also made clear in these references to John Cumming in the Seafield Papers.<sup>11</sup> (See Appendix 1.)

The training of musicians and poets was thus a well-established and widely understood convention in Gaelic society, with roots into a prehistoric past. There was considerable social pressure to conform to these cultural practices and the traditional values of Gaelic society were as keenly sustained in the north-east Highlands as in the Hebrides. (See Appendix 2.) The Revd James Kirkwood writing to the Celtic scholar, Edward Llyud, in the late 17th century about Highland customs, described the position of pipers:

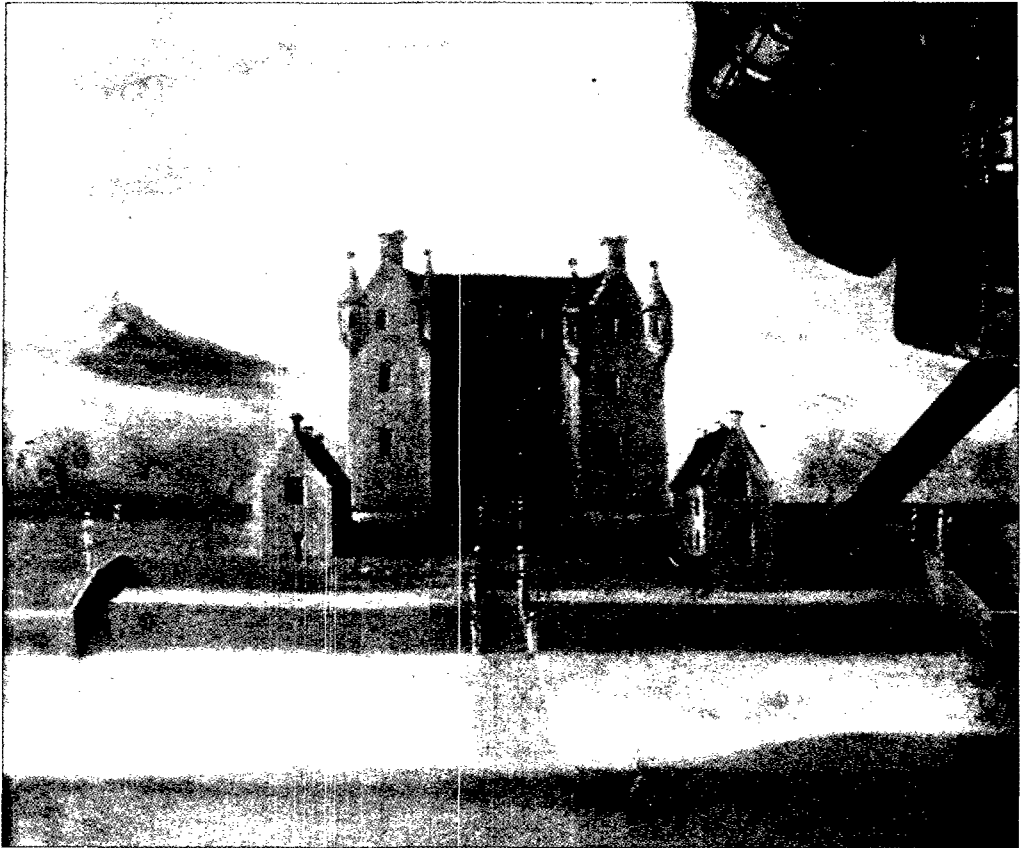
Pipers are held in great Request so that they are train'd up at the Expençe of grandees and have a portion of land assigned and are design'd such a man's piper (Campbell 1975, 49).

The figure in the portrait in contemporary Highland dress and equipped with bagpipe and weaponry is worthy of comment. Cumming's set of pipes present something of a conundrum to the musicologist. They are of a style of turning and decoration quite unknown from surviving (though extremely rare pieces) of material evidence. The disposition of chanter, drones and blowpipe is credible, and the tying-in of the chanter stock to the bag (without any cover) is an impressive detail. The chanter itself, with a wide bell and *fontanella* feature, is more reminiscent of early forms of oboe and may have been a detail reconstructed in studio conditions. The relative sizes of the drones, especially the *dos mor* or bass drone, and their style of turning and large bell terminals are without parallel in the surviving material culture evidence.

The comment is often made that the piper is playing off the wrong shoulder and that he is a 'left-handed piper', a term used perversely to describe a player with his pipes over his right shoulder and his right hand uppermost on the chanter. In a general trend in the late 19th and 20th centuries towards the standardization of every aspect of piping, it became *de rigueur* to hold the pipes under the left arm with the drones over the left shoulder, and with the left hand uppermost on the chanter. This has been a uniformity demanded of service in the armed forces and the regimentation of the pipe band. There was no musical reason to conform to an accepted norm. This way of holding the pipes has in recent generations been regarded as a Highland or Gaelic trait or mannerism and in fact has been more common in the Highlands and Islands or among pipers of Gaelic background. The early MacCrimmon pipers were said to play off the right shoulder and the pupil will tend to imitate the master.

The piper's uniform is impressive; he appears to be more elaborately accoutred than the Grant lairds and kinsmen themselves in the other portraits in the Waitt series. The coat of arms is an accurate representation of Grant matriculation and the use of a *bratach* or banner on the pipes, normal in military ceremonial of the 19th and 20th centuries, is attested in historical sources (Hume Brown 1891, 265). The decoration of the shoulder-slung sword belt, apparently with fur, seems a faint echo of the medieval importance of fur as a staple trading commodity and hence its prestige. It is evident that the equipping of the retinue was important to the chieftains. It receives attention in the Seafield Papers where specific orders are given, in the Regality Court Books, for example, for uniformity in considerable detail. The fencible men were to be clothed '... out of their fies'. The Dunvegan Papers record purchases of 'livery cloathes for MacCrimmon, MacLeod's Pyper' in a payment of 57 merks and six shillings to an Edinburgh merchant. The same papers record gifts to the harper and piper, specifically in the form of a bonnet (Matheson 1970, XLVII; Morrison 1967, 335; Grant 1959, 376).

In the background, set in a Highland landscape, the castellated building with lodges or



ILLUS 2 Representation of Castle Grant in the early 18th century, in the background of William Cumming's portrait (*Courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland*)

pavilions is assumed to be Castle Grant (illus 2). The turreted corners of the wings on the main structure do not exist on the present Castle Grant which is largely the work of the architect John Adam. Correspondence of the latter in the 1750s refers to the taking down of the superstructure of the existing castle and the creation of a 'cap house' and battlemented wall walk. The Waitt portrait seems to offer the best visual representation of a pre-18th-century Castle Grant; however, the suggestion has been made that even this is an approximation since alterations were even then envisaged to turn the building into a symmetrical structure, and the turreted wings may not have been in existence in 1714.<sup>12</sup>

The Laird of Grant's desire for order and uniformity – and the readiness to provide it which we infer from the portrait – is borne out in an account of the service of the Grants in the 1715 Rising. As Commander and Lord Lieutenant of Banff and Inverness, he found himself personally paying many of the expenses of his regiment:

... his men were orderly paid at the rate of sixpence a day, well armed and clothed, ordinarily in one livery of tartan, and furnished with all other necessaries to defend them from the rigour of the season (Fraser 1883, III, 329).



The contemporary style of Highland dress and the Grant's adoption of it is corroborated and described in one of the accounts of the marching and counter-marching in the Rising of 1715. The Grants, as a Whig Presbyterian clan, joined a force trying to contain the Jacobite MacGregors in the vicinity of Inversnaid and prevent them raiding into the Lowlands around Dumbarton:

James Grant of Pluscarden ... Brother German to Brigadier Grant, followed by forty or fifty stately fellows in their short hose and belted plaids, and arm'd each of them with a well fix'd gun on his shoulder, a strong handsome target, with a sharp pointed steel of above half and ell in length screw'd into the Navel of it, on his left arm, a sturdy Claymore by his side, and a Pistol or two with a Durk and knife on his belt ... (Dennistoun 1834, 56).

In conclusion, Richard Waitt's portrait of William Cumming, Piper to the Laird of Grant, is an exceptional document of social and cultural history, giving a graphic dimension to traits of Highland and Scottish history otherwise represented only by the written word or, exceptionally, in surviving oral traditions of the Gaidhealtachd.

## NOTES

- 1 SRO, Seafield Papers, GD 248/17/3 & GD 248/210.
- 2 SRO, Seafield Papers, GD 248/210 (unsorted).
- 3 SRO, Cromdale, Inverallan and Advie Parish Register, 11 February 1705 and 23 July 1710.
- 4 SRO, Seafield Papers, GD 248/113 (unnumbered).
- 5 SRO, Seafield Papers, GD 248/108 (Factory Accounts).
- 6 SRO, Seafield Papers, GD 248/67/4.
- 7 SRO, Seafield Papers, GD 248/113 (unnumbered).
- 8 SRO, Seafield Papers, GD 248/114 (unnumbered).
- 9 SRO, Seafield Papers, GD 248/376 (unnumbered).
- 10 SRO, Seafield Papers, GD 248/51/2/78.
- 11 SRO, Seafield Papers GD 248/51/2/78 & GD 248/2803.
- 12 Discussed in conversation with Mr George Dixon and Mr Richard Emmerson, March 1994.

## APPENDIX 1

Copy letter from Sir James Grant of Grant to Dr McLean, Skye, 18 October 1774:

Dear Sir

The bearer goes for young Cumming, whom you was so kind as to take under your Protection. I imagine he will now be perfectly instructed as a Piper. If he is not, it must be his own fault, as I am certain he has been under the best Master in Scotland. Whatever is necessary to be done on my part, Allow me to intreat your kind Attention to, and I will most thankfully repay it, to any person you desire to receive it, either at Inverness, or any where else you please.

All this family join in respectful Compliments and I remain wt unfeign'd regard Dr Sir, Your most Obedt hule Servt

JA: GRANT

Letterbook copy letter from Sir James Grant of Grant to his Strathspey factor, James McGregor, 25 October 1784:

Edinr 25 Octr 1784.

Dear Sir

The Bearer John Cumming goes down in order to settle at Grantown as Piper to the Family and likewise Servant in any thing they may find necessary to employ him You are to give him for this year commencing at Martinmass first Six pounds Sterling of Wages and two pecks of Meal p Week for his Maintenance And in Consideration that he has not been down in time to cast his peats you are to procure him one leet of peats And provided he settles at Grantown as establish'd Piper for the Family I make over to him all my right and Claim to the debt Principal & Interests that I have on the Tenement in Grantown and the House thereon built and possessed by his Father and now inhabited by his Mother only he is to allow his Mother to remain undisturbed in the Room she presently possesses during her Life if she insists on it And he binds himself not to sell vend or retail Ale or Spirits of any kind any way whatever without a licence for so doing. If he does in the Contrary then he forfeits the right given him of my Claim & debt on said house and besides to be liable to penalty and damages alike with real Tenementers. You will order for him two or three of the long Carriages to carry up his Furniture from Findhorn.

During the absence of the Family you will consider what he may be employed in to save expence either at Castle Grant or taking care of any of the plantations And I wish John Cumming also to have Miss Grants Garden at Whitsunday next for one year & thereafter during pleasure he taking care of the planting therein and of the Dykes I am

Dr Sir

Yours &c

[JA: GRANT]

Copy Character in favr of John Cumming

These are to certify that the bearer John Cumming has been known to me from his Infancy & has been in my Service As a house Servant above Seven years. He is a very capable good Servant, and honest faithful and sober. He has been regularly taught to play on the Highland Bag-pipe, and requires nothing but practice to excel upon that Instrument.

Signed [JA: GRANT]

Castle Grant 7th July 1785<sup>11</sup>

## APPENDIX 2

'Notes Descriptive and Historical relating to the Parish of Moy', c 1774

The piper was a man of such Consequence, that he had a Boy attending to carry his pipe when he did not play. The pipe was decorated with Ribbands of the same colour with the livery of the

family; his duty was in peace to play morning and evening in front of the Castle, and in War to call the Clan to Arms, to inspire them in the fight, and give them notice to retreat when necessary, which three parts of Duty are well expressed in the pipe Marches. Frequently in the harvest, the Reapers cut the Corn regularly to a tune, which Custom is still preserved in the Isle of Sky, where the only good pipers are reared and to be found, for there, regular Colledges are formed for instructing youth in using that Martial Instrument. The piper had a piece of Ground granted to him and his posterity, Rent free, which was secured him tho' the rest of the Estate might be sold or forfeited, for the late Ld. Lovat's piper possesses the spot formerly given him, tho' the rest of the Estate was forfeited. The present family piper, has been thirty years in their service, was reckoned a good piper being bred under McCrimmon, a famous one in the Colledge of Sky; he has two sons equally good, one with Farquharson of Invercauld the other with Grant of Rothimurchus. The old man has held the farm of Tullochclury for all that time, no rent being ever asked. Pipers turn scarce, and if encouragement is not soon given, none will be found in the Country (Mackintosh of Mackintosh 1892, 35–6).

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