

Manx Notes 40 (2005)

“I DO NOT PROFESS TO BE MORE THAN A COMPILER”

A.W. MOORE TO KARL ROEDER (1897)

March 12. 97

Dear Mr Roeder

I have just been perusing your Folklore in Yn Liooar [sic] Vanninagh with great interest & pleasure.¹ You have certainly gone to work in the right way & I can only say that it does not reflect much credit on Manxmen to have left a ‘Stranger’ to do it. I do not, however, know a Manxman who could do it nearly so well! As for me I have not, as you know, enough spare time to go about among the people as I could wish, & I do not profess to be more than a compiler. I have-by-the-way some Folklore Notes* which the “Mona’s Herald” people have had in their clutches for some time past. I must get them from them & publish them in the same magazine. When you have completed your researches you should write a Folklore of the I.O.M. I see you have some fragments of ballads. If had known you were collecting them, I should have asked you to send me what you had, but now my book is published.² I have several verses of ‘Moghrey Laa Bauldyn’ but these are too indecent to publish. As to Hop-tu-naa there are scraps of it all over the Island which vary indefinitely. Your Manx Stories are splendid & it is really wonderful how much you have got. I cordially congratulate you. I was sorry not to have been able to get over to Ramsey to hear your paper. When you are next in the I. please take the opportunity of calling on me.

I^m sincerely | A.W. Moore

Source: Letter from A.W. Moore to Karl Roeder, 12 March 1897, Manchester City Library, Manchester City Archives, M277/12/1-65.



A.W. Moore was one of those polymath figures the Victorian age effortlessly produced. Active as an antiquarian, he was also active in Manx political life, eventually becoming the Speaker of the House of Keys.³ He was also interested in

¹ Charles Roeder, “Contributions to the Folk Lore of the Isle of Man,” *Yn Lioar Manninagh* iii.iv (1887).

² A.W. Moore, *Manx Ballads and Music* (Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896).

³ Moore is extensively discussed in John Belchem, “The Little Manx Nation: Antiquarianism, Ethnic Identity, and Home Rule Politics in the Isle of Man, 1880–1918,” *Journal of British Studies* 39 (2000).

Manx folklore and folk song, publishing *The Folk-lore of the Isle of Man* in 1891 and *Manx Ballads and Music* in 1896.⁴ The latter has come to figure as the standard account but suffers from the weakness that its author identified himself, that it is heavily based on existing printed sources. And the reason: “I have not, as you know, enough spare time to go about among the people as I could wish [...]” For *Manx Ballads and Music*, Moore had used a network of helpers to gather texts and tunes, chief among them Harry Bridson. Originally a schoolmaster at Cronkbourne,

[...] he was for many years secretary to the late Mr A.W. Moore, S.H.K. when that gentleman was proprietor of the Cronkbourne (or, Tromode) factory, and he assisted that gentleman greatly in his researches into old Manx folklore and folksong.⁵

Roeder was different and whilst visiting the Island in past summers on holiday he had built up during his own fieldwork a small circle of informants who sent him material contained in letters or in notebooks.⁶ The most notable of these individuals was Edward Faragher (1831–1908) of Cregneash,⁷ but there were also others, the Hudsons of Ballfession being among them.⁸ In their case, Roeder even stayed with them:

“[...] we are glad to hear from you & to find that you enjoyed your vissett to the island but when you cum agane we must try and make you more cumfortable then to let you stretch on A Couch.”⁹

*

STEPHEN MILLER
VIENNA, 2005

⁴ A.W. Moore, *The Folk-lore of the Isle of Man* (Douglas & London: David and Son & David Nutt, 1891), *Manx Ballads and Music* (Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896). For other publications in this field by Moore, see Stephen Miller, “A.W. Moore: An Interim Checklist of Writings on Manx Folkways,” *Manx Notes: Folkways and Language* 10 (1993).

⁵ “Death of Mr Harry Bridson,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 9 January 1925: 5 col. d.

⁶ For his publications on Manx folklore, see Stephen Miller, “Karl Roeder: An Updated Checklist of Writings on Manx Folklore,” *Manx Notes* 16 (2004).

⁷ For other material about Edward Faragher already presented here, see fn 3 in Stephen Miller, “‘Both times he was out’: Sophia Morrison and Edward Faragher,” *Manx Notes* 39 (2005).

⁸ Stephen Miller, “‘We write you a few lines’: Karl Roeder and the Hudsons of Ballafession,” *Manx Notes* 35 (2004).

⁹ Letter from John Hudson to Karl Roeder, 25 August 1896, MNHL, MS 1135 A, undivided.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY

MS II35 A Letter from John Hudson to Karl Roeder, 25 August 1896.

PRINTED SOURCES

- Anon. “Death of Mr Harry Bridson.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 9 January 1925: 5 col. d.
- Belchem, John. “The Little Manx Nation: Antiquarianism, Ethnic Identity, and Home Rule Politics in the Isle of Man, 1880–1918.” *Journal of British Studies* 39 (2000): 217–40.
- Miller, Stephen. “A.W. Moore: An Interim Checklist of Writings on Manx Folkways.” *Manx Notes: Folkways and Language* 10 (1993): 1–2.
- . “Karl Roeder: An Updated Checklist of Writings on Manx Folklore.” *Manx Notes* 16 (2004): 1–2.
- . “‘We write you a few lines’: Karl Roeder and the Hudsons of Ballafesson.” *Manx Notes* 35 (2004): 1–2.
- . “‘Both times he was out’: Sophia Morrison and Edward Faragher.” *Manx Notes* 39 (2005): 1–2.
- Moore, A.W. *The Folk-lore of the Isle of Man*. Douglas & London: David and Son & David Nutt, 1891.
- . *Manx Ballads and Music*. Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896.
- Roeder, Charles. “Contributions to the Folk Lore of the Isle of Man.” *Yn Lioar Manninagh* iii.iv (1887): 129–91.

