

Manx Notes 43 (2005)

“THY DEATH BROWN WILLIAM IS BREAKING OUR HEARTS”
“BAASE ILLIAM DHONE” AS HEARD SUNG IN 1818

1818

[...] This high spirited lady [i.e., the Countess of Derby] the Manks still remember by the name of Ben-Frangach (or Frenchwoman). The people in general regard this unfortunate transaction with horror, for they still, (though certainly not a poetical people) delight in reciting an Elegy composed on the occasion, every verse of which concludes, with ‘Se do vas Illiam Donn, ha brisi our Cri; (Thy death Brown William is breaking our hearts).¹ They also remark, that none of those who were concerned in this Prosecution ever afterwards prospered; instancing in particular, the once distinguished family of Colquitt the head of which then happened to be Attorney General. An eminent family conspicuous for its uniform hostility to the Ducal interests is said to be lineally descended from this Receiver General Christian. Upon the Duke of Athole’s first visit to the Isle of Mann, a verse was added to this elegy, couched in the most respectful terms, earnestly cautioning His Grace, from giving heed to false advisers, alluding to a native of the Isle, said to be at the time much in the confidence of the present Duke.

Source: “Cursory Remarks, made during a residence of some months in the Isle of Mann, by an officer of the 95th Regiment in the year 1818,” 21 June 1819, Manx National Heritage Library, AP 147 (1st)–9.

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An addition to Stephen Miller, *“There is dances used on sonday afternoone”*: *Historical References to Manx Folk Song and Dance before 1896*, Preprint ed. (Onchan: Chiollagh Books, 2005).²

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¹ “She dty vaase Illiam Dhone ta brishey nyn gree.”

² Available online at <http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/~stephen>