

Manx Notes 63 (2006)

THE GILL BROTHERS AS COLLECTORS:

(13) DEEMSTER J.F. GILL VISITS EDWARD CORTEEN (1895)

Interview with

Ed Corteen (of B:Corteen Maughold) aged 565
Surveyor Genl: of Highways—6 Ap 1895

Loss of the Herring fleet

“reckoned it a very good air”

! “those who perished were Southside Rushen men”

Song—“Thie Quiggin”

Herring fleet changing their fishing ground from West to East side of Isle round the Chickens—Looking forward to merry meeting at ~~the~~ Quiggins pub Ho. Douglas—

“Berry Dhoan”

Heroine—Margart Moore of Balla shillag Maughold—known as Margèard Moore Stomager—from ~~her~~ the masculine jacket she wore—lived in Cornah—beyond the Mine—a dreadful thing—sheep stealer—strong as 2 or 3 men—

Was chased by—she was eting in the field—at the mountain fence she was nearly overtaken—she threw off the “Stomager”

He called € his cattle by name—one bullock was “Berry-dhoan”
Margèard stole it—& drove it to the dub in the rock at top of Cornah waterfall—~~called~~ & slew it there—the dub now known as “Jannoo Berry Dhoan”

“Shannon Rea” (The sweet Shannon)

adapted from the Irish—(immoral)

Peter Corkhill of Maughold—was a great archer—Archery a favourite game in old time here He was in the Manx Fencibles—in Ireland—

Thos Kneen there also—the Capt: promised him a reward if he could find an uglier man in the Company—John bought his brother W^m (Wooley) the brothers were submitted to referees who decided that John had won the reward!

Tune “Creg-Willy-Sil” a jig—¹came from the Fairies Corteen can whistle it—

Ed Corteen played cello—at Dhoon Chapel Had good Tenor voice was advised to train it in England—

The Charm

When Corteen's brother was young he was one of the crew of a Herring boat. fishing was bad & for many nights they took nothing—

At last concluding they were bewitched sent Corteen to Charles Ballawhane the great “Witch Doctor”—on the way he fell in with some young companions with whom he spent the remainder of the day drinking

“Next day he did not know in his senses what to do” it was too late to go to the D^r so he gave it up—gathered some herbs off the hedge cut them up fine & made them up into 2 or 3 tidy packets—& brought them to the boat in Douglas. The Capt: sprinkled the herbs over the ballast of the Boat—they put to sea shot their nets & took a “large hawl of herrings”—

Blessings were showered on Chas Ballwhane & regrets expressed that they had ~~h~~ not gone to him sooner—the old Capt: s^d “I wanted you enough to go”

Christian of Lewaigue—(gt Teetotaler & preacher) F.B. Clucas [Advocate]¹ & 2 others met him & saluted him as “Faith Matters”—I am not F.M. (said he) but Saul the son of Kish looking for my father's asses & lo here are 3 of them.¹

He had on the gable of his house in large letter “Prepare to meet thy God” M^r F.J.D. LaMothe (Advocate) Why have you that inscription “I hate to see it” “Yes replied C. & there is another who hates it—the Devil”—

Christie's mother was a Mylechreest of Ballamanagh Lonan—“But there was Irish in him”—

Source: “Interview with I E^d Corteen (of B:Corteen Maughold) aged 565 | Surveyor Genl: of Highways—6 Ap 1895”, loose sheet in the hand of Deemster J.F. Gill. Deemster J.F. Gill Papers, Manx National Heritage Library, MS 09702, Box 2.



Deemster J.F. Gill and his brother, W.H. Gill, agreed to go field collecting in the Easter of 1895. He sailed on the midnight boat from Liverpool on Maunday Thursday, part of the extra sailings laid on by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company for Easter,² and he arrived in Douglas at 5 a.m.³ The brothers began

¹ “And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.” 1 Sam. 9.3. KJV.

² Anon., “Sailings: Isle of Man Steam Packet Coy, Ltd,” *Ramsey Courier* 11 April 1895.

³ W.H. Gill, “Manx Music,” *Manx National Songs with English Words: Selected from the MS. Collection of the Deemster Gill, Dr. J. Clague, and W.H. Gill, and Arranged by W.H. Gill* (London: Boosey, 1896) vi.

collecting that same day, on Good Friday, 12 April 1895, but not in “out-of-the-way spots on the mountains and among the solitary glens,” as he was later to write, but rather in the surroundings of 7 Harwarden Avenue, the home of Edward Corteen in Douglas. The first tune recorded was “Hie my ghrah shaghey” (“The Lover’s Lament”), the first of five that W.H. Gill took down that day.⁴

The previous Saturday, the Deemster had been to see Corteen, taking notes of the interview that fortunately survive (and are reproduced above). Corteen was born in the parish of Maughold and there he had learnt the trade of a joiner.⁵ He later became the Parochial Surveyor for the parish, responsible for the maintenance of the highways. By 1895, he was now the Surveyor General of Highways, overseeing all of the parochial surveyors of the Island and their work. This is what may have attracted Deemster Gill to Corteen, not only that he was a singer, but that he had points of contacts in each of the Island’s seventeen parishes, and the surveyors by dint of performing their duties had contact with those living in the countryside.

*

EDWARD CORTEEN

1891 CENSUS

Age 64. Born: Maughold. Occupation: Surveyor General of Highways. Residence: 7 Harwarden Avenue, Douglas. Household: Charlotte, wife, 59, born in German. Children: Charlotte M., daughter, single, 31; Ernest C., son, single, 23, blacksmith & fitter; James A., son, single, 21, mason & plasterer; Frederick T., son, single, 18, “Pupil Teacher (Elementary School).” All born in Maughold. *Census Enumerators’ Book*, Douglas, 1891, RG 12/4688, fol. 85.

1881 CENSUS

Surveyor of Highways, Dhoon, Maughold. *Census Enumerators’ Book*, 1881, RG 11/5600, fol. 42.

DIRECTORIES

[Maughold] Road Surveyor, Dhoon (Brown 1881); Surveyor, Dhoon (Smith 1883); General Overseer of the Isle of Man (Porter 1889); General Overseer of the Isle of Man (Brown 1894).⁶

⁴ “THE ORIGINAL COLLECTION | OF | MANX FOLK MUSIC | — | MADE BY | HIS HONOUR THE DEEMSTER GILL | MR W.H. GILL & DR. CLAGUE | COMPLETED IN 1895 & 1896.” Manx National Heritage Library, MS 09702, Box 2. The other tunes were: “The Loss of the Herring Fleet,” “Creg Willy-Syl,” “Ta Traa Gholl Thie,” “The Farmer’s Boy.”

⁵ Anon., “Memorial Notices: Edward Corteen, Died June 20th, 1913,” *Manx Quarterly* 14 (1914).

⁶ The four directories relevant for the period in question are: *Brown’s Isle of Man Directory* (Douglas: James Brown & Son, 1881); *Smith’s Commercial Directory of the Isle of Man*

OFFICES HELD

Setting Quests of the Lord's Lands in the Island: Maughold [...] Edward Corteen (Brown 1894).

OBITUARIES

"Memorial Notices: Edward Corteen, Died June 20th, 1913," *Manx Quarterly*, 14 (1914), 169.

OTHER

"Interview with | E^d Corteen (of B.Corteen Maughold) aged 565 | Surveyor Genl: of Highways—6 Ap 1895". Loose, titled single sheet in the hand of Deemster J.F. Gill, dated 6 April 1895, MNHL, MS 09702, Box 2.

STEPHEN MILLER

VIENNA, 2006

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY

MANX MUSEUM MSS NEW SERIES (MS)

MS 09702 Deemster J.F. Gill Papers, Box 2 (unlisted)

"THE ORIGINAL COLLECTION | OF | MANX FOLK MUSIC | — | MADE BY | HIS HONOUR THE DEEMSTER GILL | MR W.H. GILL & DR. CLAGUE | COMPLETED IN 1895 & 1896."

"Interview with | E^d Corteen (of B.Corteen Maughold) aged 565 | Surveyor Genl: of Highways—6 Ap 1895". Loose, titled single sheet in the hand of Deemster J.F. Gill, dated 6 April 1895.

(Morley: S. Stead, 1883); *Porter's Directory for the Isle of Man* (Liverpool: Rockliff Brothers, 1889); *Brown's Directory for the Isle of Man* (Douglas: Brown and Son, 1894).

PRINTED SOURCES

- Anon. "Sailings: Isle of Man Steam Packet Coy, Ltd." *Ramsey Courier* 11 April 1895: 1 col. b.
- . "Memorial Notices: Edward Corteen, Died June 20th, 1913." *Manx Quarterly* 14 (1914): 169.
- Gill, W.H. "Manx Music." *Manx National Songs with English Words: Selected from the MS. Collection of the Deemster Gill, Dr. J. Clague, and W.H. Gill, and Arranged by W.H. Gill*. London: Boosey, 1896. v–xi.

