

Manx Notes 86 (2007)

“IT IS A FAR NOBLER SOUNDING LANGUAGE THAN YE ENGLISH”

BISHOP HILDESLEY'S COMMENTS ON THE MANX LANGUAGE

(1763 & 1764)

(1)

Amongst 3 or 400 Adults of both Sex in each of y^e Country Parishes, there are not 5 p cent of y^e Natives, take one Congregation with another, that can make sense of an English Chapter of Sermon; which y^e listening Flocks often hear to their great loss, notwithstanding 'my' repeated Injunctions to y^e Contrary.—Numbers read y^e English Bible, & that well & Intelligibly to English hearers, and at y^e same time scarce understand a sentence themselves.

(2)

Bp Hildesley makes no doubt of y^e Manks Language as well as y^e Erst, being from y^e Old Irish; but at present it seems to have a much nearer Resemblance to y^e Erst. The Manks & Highlanders can converse & understand each other readily: The Sound of their Language being much nearer than their Writing. It is a far ~~more~~ Nobler Sounding Language than y^e English. The great difficulty of pronouncing y^e Manks to an Englishman, is the sounding y^e gh & ch,—both being used tho' seemingly one is droppd. The Word Lough, The Irish, Scotch & Welch can pronounce, but y^e English can hardly Master it.

Source: (1) Extract from a letter from Bishop Hildesley to Richard Gough, 2 December 1763, “Collections Relating to y^e Isle of Man,” Bodleian MS Gough Islands I, 66; (2) Based on information in a letter from Bishop Hildesley to Richard Gough, 10 January 1764, “Collections Relating to y^e Isle of Man,” Bodleian MS Gough Islands I, 66.

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