

# Manx Notes 126 (2011)

W.H. GILL IN SUSSEX  
A RESOURCE GUIDE

## [1] LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO DORA RADCLIFFE BROWN (28 OCTOBER 1908)

Yesterday for instance I spent the greater part of the day at Horsham pumping traditional songs out of an old man of 85 who sings by heart upwards of 400 odd Songs of course that number includes a good many that are neither very old nor worth preserving but all have to be carefully heard and weighed in the balance and means many pilgrimages on my part.

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to Dora Radcliffe Brown (*née* Gill), 28 October 1908, MNHL, MS 1059/7 C (a).

## [2] LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO SOPHIA MORRISON, 29 APRIL 1911

“Thanks for your report of progress re publication of Dr Clague’s music. I have completed “all thass in”—ie. on the theory (which I belive to be the fact) that Dr C had sent me every note in his possession and of this material I have utilized all that is worth presenting. As a collection per se, ie apart from the Piano Book (or portion of it) I do not think it would make a worthy Memorial volume.

Some time ago a London Music Publisher—not Boosey—suggested to me whether in view of my success with the Manx Songs I would be disposed to “go in” for English folk-songs and as he was very much in earnest and expressed his confidence in my methods I consented & have already made a start in my immediate neighbourhood. Then I interviewed the Editor of our local newspaper with the result recorded in the enclosed cutting. He is very enthusiastic on the subject and has fallen in love with our own ‘Manx’ treasures. Already I have discovered, close by, three of ours (sung of course ~~to~~ to English words) and shall not be surprised to find many more.”

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to Sophia Morrison, 29 April 1911, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 2.

**[3] LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO WILLIAM CUBBON (1 SEPTEMBER 1911)**

It may interest you to see from the enclosed cutting ~~that~~ from the “West Sussex Gazette” that I am once more on the war-path in respect of Folk Song collecting. Already I have found within a two mile radius of my house two Melodies which I had fondly claimed as Manx! Of course this is to be expected and other similar cases will surely follow.

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to William Cubbon, 1 September 1911, MNHL, MS 11170, William Cubbon Papers, Box 1. See binder marked “MLS”.

**[4] LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO SOPHIA MORRISON (4 JANUARY 1912)**

A comparison of my experiences here with those in Our Island is to me one of peculiar interest and the occasional finding in Sussex of a tune which I had fondly appropriated as exclusively Manx is, to say the least of it, a bit disturbing. But the fact that so many of our most admired tunes have been sung in Mann to Manx words that are either imitation or translations of English words only shows that such tunes ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> <sup>rather</sup> <sup>though</sup> vagrants and comeing from nobody knows where. <sup>They</sup> <sup>are</sup> <sup>still</sup> <sup>ours</sup> <sup>by</sup> <sup>adoption</sup>

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to Sophia Morrison, 4 January 1912, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 1.

**[5] LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO ANNIE GELL, 7 MARCH 1912**

You may have heard mention of the renaissance in me of the old folk-song spirit of enterprise, and how, after having exhausted (apparently at last) our Manx resources, I have had the audacity to carry the warfare into the English camp. Beginning with my newly-acquired home-county of Sussex and its opportunities may allow. I find the mere personal contact with these old native-singers—shepherds for the most part most fascinating & mentally helpful. One of these, a noted Bell-Ringer in the days when bell-ringing was a fine-art—lives at Horsham and is 85. His verbal memory is phenomenal and he has a repertoire of 400 songs! You have only to quote the first line of any one of these and off he goes like a phonograph & the difficulty is to stop him before he comes to the end—sometimes the bitter end. Of course these songs include “mo’sly all swits,” as they would say in Mann <sup>and</sup> <sup>only</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>few</sup> <sup>suitable</sup> <sup>ones</sup> <sup>but</sup> <sup>and</sup> out of the county generally I have already collected enough for a moderately sized book which is nearly ready for the printer.

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to Annie Gell, 7 March 1912, MNHL, MD 96–6.

**[6] LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO SOPHIA MORRISON (25 JUNE 1913)**

You may be interested to know that I am full of work on a commission from Curwens for an extensive two year's collection of British Folk-Songs into which I hope to smuggle a goodly infusion of Manx! It will run into several volumes and be I hope fairly representative of the "Five Nations." I little thought when I took up the more modest Sussex collection that the enterprise would be so extensively enlarged.

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to Sophia Morrison, 25 June 1913, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 2.

**[7] LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO ANNIE GELL, 16 AUGUST 1913**

As to health considerations it is wonderful what sheer will-power combined with the 'simple life' has done & is still doing for me. And just now I am more full of work and enterprise than ever. [...] My present program is downright audacious at my time of life, e.g. some 3 vols or more of British Folk Songs, including Manx, a new Notation of Music, & Collaboration (but tell it not in Garth) in a Manx Operetta!—a fairly big order for a youngster of 74! Its shocking the capers thass in. My love to you all—roots and branches of our dear good old Family Tree.

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to Annie Gell, 16 August 1913, MNHL, MD 96–8.

**[8] LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO SOPHIA MORRISON, 22 SEPTEMBER 1913**

Leaves. | Sept 22. 1913.

[Re "The Golden Vanity"] My own "arrangement" of it will appear in my Series Book of Folk Songs (British, including a few Manx) which Messrs Curwen are about to publish.

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to Sophia Morrison, 22 September 1913, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 2.

[9] **LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO SOPHIA MORRISON, 7 OCTOBER 1913**

As to my work for Curwen now he has secured my MSS, and this before settling the price, he is in no hurry to go to press; somebody else can see it through after I am gone. Such is life and I have been waiting for proofs some six months or more!

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to Sophia Morrison, 7 October 1913, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 2.

[10] **LETTER FROM SOPHIA MORRISON TO J.J. KNEEN (13 OCTOBER 1913)**

Here is a letter from Mr W.H. Gill in answer to one of mine in which I had asked him to write a brief Note for our Notes page, upon his work for Curwen—But he didn't send the Note!

**Source:** Letter from Sophia Morrison to J.J. Kneen, 13 October 1913, MNHL, ms 1086/38 c.

[11] **LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO SOPHIA MORRISON, 9 DECEMBER 1913**

The fact is I have been swamped in a sea of work against time and tide owing to my Sussex Folk Song enterprise of the past 2 years having at last come into definite existence & ready for the printer.

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to Sophia Morrison, 9 December 1913, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 2.

[12] **LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO WILLIAM CUBBON (22 MARCH 1914)**

However I must not grumble for my enterprise continues in spite of advancing years and my experience in the art of ~~eth~~ [*interlined both*] collecting and “cooking” mushrooms—I mean folk-songs—in our sweet little Island has won for me quite a considerable reputation as an expert on this side of the water and I am now very busy working for Mess<sup>rs</sup> Curwen. The finding of an occasional “Manx” mushroom on the South Downs does not greatly disturb my theories about “Manx” Music. Importation and Exportation must go together. “World-Manx!” eh?

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to William Cubbon, 31 January 1914, MNHL, MS III70, William Cubbon Papers, Box 1. See binder marked “MLS”.

**[I3] LETTER FROM SOPHIA MORRISON TO J.J. KNEEN (22 MARCH 1914)**

As to Mr W.H. Gill—I have not had a letter from him since December last—I don't think that he wrote to me this year—He said in his letter that he was greatly rushed with work re his Sussex Folk Song Collection for Curwen's[.]

**Source:** Letter from Sophia Morrison to J.J. Kneen, 22 March 1914, MNHL, MS 1513/1 B.

**[I4] LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO SOPHIA MORRISON (6 APRIL 1914)**

One other point you ought to know and this has only just now arisen. My "Sussex Songs" Scheme has been abandoned in favour of a larger project. viz. a Collection of Folk-Songs including all parts of the United Kingdom so that I am in hopes of finding places for some of ours. The Collection is to come out in [one-shilling] Books each containing 20 Songs and the first 3 or 4 books are now almost ready for the printer. Forgive me for troubling you with so long a letter.

**Source:** Letter from W.H. Gill to Sophia Morrison, 6 April 1914, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 2.

**[I5] LETTER FROM A.G. GILCHRIST TO SOPHIA MORRISON (3 OCTOBER 1915)**

It is interesting to hear of Mr Gill's recognising Manx airs in Sussex. It is a very fruitful county for folk song (I have myself collected about fifty songs on the Sussex & Kent border, the best of which have been printed in the Folk-Song Journal) and though it has been well searched I would not question Mr Gill's being able to find new versions and even new songs in its rural depths. If he is interested in comparing versions, he might like to see Miss Lucy Broadwood's and Mr [W.] Percy Merrick's excellent collections of Sussex Songs in the volumes of the Folk-Song Journal.

**Source:** Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to Sophia Morrison, 3 October 1915, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 1.

**[I6] "NOTICES OF BOOKS," MANNIN 5 (1915)**

In the April number of *The Choir* the editor has started his biographical sketches of Mr W.H. Gill's career as a musician, an artist, and a man of letters, which will be

especially interesting to Manx people, who are, perhaps not all entirely aware of the many-sidedness of Mr Gill's powers. He was for many years honorary secretary of the London Ruskin Society, and in the Ruskin Museum at Sheffield, a drawing of his occupies a place of honour. Mr Gill is at the present engaged in a collection of Folk Songs of the United Kingdom, which will be brought out by Messrs Curwen and Sons, in shilling parts, each containing twenty songs.

**Source:** "Notices of Books," *Mannin* 5 (1915): 311.

### [17] SONGS OF THE BRITISH FOLK (1917)

Songs of the British Folk | (Curwen's Edition, 5795) | Collected and edited | by W. H. GILL | Editor of "Manx National Songs" | [Device] | LONDON | J. Curwen & Sons Ltd | 24 Berners Street, W. 1 | Copyright, 1917, by J. Curwen & Sons Ltd | Price Two Shillings and Sixpence

**Source:** W.H. Gill, *Songs of the British Folk* (London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1917). **Note:** The device or artwork is by Archibald Knox (1864–1933). **Copies:** Only six copies in public collections to date are known: (1) British Library, Printed Music, St Pancras Reading Rooms, E.1766.U.(7.) E; (2) Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House. Title page bears inked stamp of ownership, "R. J. Sharp". Personal copy of R.J. Sharp with annotations; (3) Exeter Central Library, Exeter Performing Arts, M780.I42 GIL; (4) Library of Congress, Performing Arts Reading Room (Madison, LM113) M1740.G48. Copy listed in Library of Congress, *A Check List of the Literature and Other Material in the Library of Congress on the European War* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918), 284; (5) Brown University Library, Orwig Music Library, James T. Koetting Ethnomusicology Archive, Loraine Wyman Collection, 1859–1952, see Series 3, Printed Music, Box 15 / Folder 9; (6) University of Mississippi, Williams Library, Media/Music, M1738.G45 s6 1917. From the personal library of Kenneth S. Goldstein. Copy (rebound at some date) is annotated on the title page with the original owner's name in ink "E. A. White" and with the date "7/6/17" in pencil (presumably when purchased or acquired). The Rev. E.A. White (1869–1958) later the author of *An Index of Songs contributed to the Journal of the Folk Song Society, 1899–1931, and its continuation the Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, to 1950* (London: The English Folk Dance and Song Society, 1951). For an obituary notice, see F[rank] H[owes], "The Rev. E.A. White (1869–1958)," *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 8.4 (1959), 178.

[18] **JOHN GRAHAM, “INTRODUCTION,” SONGS OF THE BRITISH FOLK (1917)**

**Source:** John Graham, “Introduction,” *Songs of the British Folk* (London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1917), [unpaged].

[19] **W.H. GILL, “NOTES ON THE SONGS,” SONGS OF THE BRITISH FOLK (1917)**

**Source:** W.H. Gill, “Notes on the Songs,” *Songs of the British Folk* (London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1917), [unpaged].

[20] **“MR. W.H.GILL AND HIS FOLK SONGS,” SCRIBBLE (MAY 1917)**

MR W.H. GILL AND HIS FOLK SONGS

[5a] We have had sent to us for review by the publishers, Messrs J. Curwen and Sons Ltd. “Songs of the British Folk,” collected and edited by Mr Gill Editor of the “Manx National Songs.” We were most delighted to read the introduction written by Mr John Graham and we are certain that our readers will be interested to learn that [5b] Mr Gill has unique qualifications for the work he has undertaken, in fact, he has made a life long study of this class of music. He is a great enthusiast and is lucky to have sufficient leisure to pursue it thoroughly. Twenty years ago he made an exhaustive search for the traditional songs of his fatherland, “the Little Manx Nation.” His brother, the late Deemster Gill, and a friend, the late Dr John Clague, were constantly collecting material or names of old singers and for three consecutive years Mr W.H. Gill spent his annual month’s holiday at Douglas, digging up old records for putting into suitable form for publication.

HIS LOCAL FOLK-SONGS

In his present collection which we have now before us, a much wider field has to be covered, but it began at home at Angmering and within a small radius of his house at the foot of Highdown, from which a little experimental reconnoitring lent no small encouragement to his ambitions. Mr Gill as one of the founders of the Folk Song Society, was acquainted with the literature of the subjects and the finds of other members. In the present edition he deals with twenty-seven songs which he has set to music and when we remember that most of these he has collected from local individuals who in some cases probably did not know a note of music, it is evident that the patience displayed by Mr Gill is nothing short of marvellous. On the other hand it is easy to see that he must have spent many a happy day amongst the old people listening to folk songs that had almost passed into oblivion, and if a man of leisure and musical ability had not arrived on the scene these rare old songs might have been lost altogether.

Amongst the local contributors are Mr and Mrs. Sivyver of Clapham Sussex. Mr Michael Bland of Patching, Mr Green a road labourer of Angmering and others. Space will not permit our dealing with the twenty-seven songs different songs, all of which we have played over and enjoyed. We were surprised however that “Richard of Taunton Dean” had anything to do with Sussex, Yorkshire, or Lancashire, as we understood it to be an old Somersetshire song published by Chappell & Co. the music arranged by J.L. Molloy. The [6a] air and the words are very similar to one another. If Mr Gill will pay us a the compliment one day of a visit we will sing our version over to him. We are indeed glad to have amongst us such a talented musician and we hope he will be spared many years to continue this good and valuable work, although to him it’s a hobby.

Source: Anon. “Mr W.H. Gill and his Folk Songs,” *Scribble* 1.6 (May 1917): 5–6 col. a.

[21] **W.H. GILL, “[CORRESPONDENCE] A PLEA FOR FOLK-SONG COLLECTING,” SCRIBBLE (JUNE 1917)**

Correspondence.

A PLEA FOR FOLK-SONG COLLECTING.

*To the Editor of SCRIBBLE.*

[9a] DEAR SIR,

My best thanks to you for so kindly bringing under the notice of your readers my recently published book of Folk-Songs. The original intention was to confine the collection to Sussex songs exclusively, but the publishers, Messrs. Curwen, on finding that I had been fishing for many years previously in various parts of the kingdom, as well as in the fathomless depths of the British Museum Library, suggested an extension of the title “Sussex Songs” to the fuller one now adopted, namely, “Songs of the British Folk”—the idea being that if this first installment succeeds the material held over is amply sufficient to fill a series of other similar volumes. Some of your readers will doubtless recognise among the songs in this first selection their own contributions. Others, unfortunately, will find that theirs have been altogether omitted; but, if so, it may be to them some consolation to know that their songs have been reserved for subsequent volumes. Meanwhile, I would gladly visit personally any of your readers who may be able to remember if only *bits* of old songs they used to sing as children. I say “bits” by way of encouragement to those lovers of music (and there are many such) who, although unable to sing an entire song in drawing-room fashion, may yet recollect stray bits here and there of either the [9b] music or

the words. Our business as collectors consists largely in the gathering of mere fragments to be afterwards carefully fitted together. A folk-song is a thing *sui generis*. It *grows*, and it has *done growing*. Hence the many “variants” of the same song as found in different counties. Eventually only the best of these will survive. Meanwhile, the more the merrier.

Yours faithfully, | W.H. Gill | Anmgring, June 23, 1917.

Source: W.H. Gill “[Correspondence] A Plea for Folk-Song Collecting,” *Scribble* 1.7 (June 1917): 9.

[22] THE MUSICAL TIMES (1 JULY 1917)

*Songs of the British Folk*. Collected and edited by W.H. Gill (Curwen).

This is a book of twenty-seven lyrics, with an introduction by Mr John Graham indicating that Mr Gill has gathered hundreds of traditional songs and that the present volume is part of the result. Judged by this the little book is rather disappointing, as so much of its contents, in more or less similar versions, have already been published. “Twankydllo,” “My Bonny Boy,” “I must live all alone,” “Cupid the pretty Ploughboy,” “Rosebuds in June,” “Richard of Taunton Dean,” and some others given by Mr Gill may be compared with copies in *English Country Songs*, *English Traditional Songs and Carols* (Miss Broadwood), *Sussex Songs*, and Dr Barrett’s *English Folk-Songs*. “Some love to roam o’er the deep sea foam” is not a folk-song. Its words are by Charles Mackay and the air by Henry Russell. Also “Miss Myrtle is going to be married” is (words and music) by Lady Dufferin, when she was Mrs Price Blackwood. “Nobody’s coming to marry me” is common in old song-books and early music sheets, while “My rattling mare and I,” was a popular street song in the ’sixties.

Source: “*Songs of the British Folk*. Collected and edited by W.H. Gill (Curwen),” *The Musical Times*, 58.893 (1 July 1917), 313 col. b.

[23] M.L. W[ILLIAMS], “[NOTICES OF BOOKS] SONGS OF THE BRITISH FOLK,” MANNIN 9 (1917)

Songs of the British Folk.—Mr W.H. Gill has brought out a collection of folk-songs entitled *Songs of the British Folk*. It contains twenty-seven folk songs, mostly from Sussex, sung by the natives. One old man was prepared to sing any one of some four hundred songs asked for, from a list of titles which he used to show. The melodies of three: Colin and Phoebe, Collier Lads, and The Golden Glove, appear in Manx National Music. One, entitled The Father is taken from Dr Clague’s collection,

words by the late Miss Cookson of Douglas. The ornament on the title page is a characteristic one by Mr Archibald Knox. Curwens are the publishers.

**Source:** M.L. W[illiams], “[Notices of Books] Songs of the British Folk,” *Mannin*, 9 (1917), 570.



TABLE I : SONGS OF THE BRITISH FOLK

NO	TITLE
1	“Blacksmith’s song (Twanky-dillo)”
2	“The bold princess royal”
3	“Bold Reynard”
4	“Cherry-cheeked Patty”
5	“Colin and Phoebe”
6	“Collier lads”
7	“Cupid, the pretty plough-boy”
8	“The farmer’s boy”
9	“The father”
10	“The fox”
11	“The golden glove”
12	“The golden vanitee”
13	“Green mossy banks of the Lea”
14	“I must live all alone”
15	“Miss Myrtle”
16	“My bonnie boy”
17	“My old wife”
18	“My rattl’ing mare and I”
19	“Nobody coming to marry me”
20	“The old broom-dasher”
21	“Owen (Llangollen Market)”
22	“Richard of Taunton Dean”
23	“Rosebuds in June”
24	“Some love to roam”
25	“Ward the pirate”
26	“William and Mary”
27	“William Taylor”

TABLE 2 : KNOWN SOURCES

TITLE	SINGER
“Blacksmith’s song (Twankydillo)”	“Collected by Editor of <i>West Sussex Gazette</i> .”
“The bold princess royal”	“Taken down from the singing of sailors, at their Home in Littlehampton.”
“Cherry-cheeked Patty”	“As sung to me by H. Burstow, Horsham.”
“Colin and Phoebe”	“Taken down from the singing of Mrs Sivyver, Clapham, Sussex, February 1911.”
“Collier lads”	“Taken down from the singing of Mr Sivyver, farm labourer, Clapham, Sussex, formerly coasting seaman. February 1911.”
“The farmer’s boy”	“Sent in for <i>West Sussex Gazette</i> competition, 1904, by Arthur Digane, 15 Duke Street, Littlehampton.”
“The golden vanitee”	“Version sung by Green of Angmering.”
“Green mossy banks of the Lea”	“Taken down from the singing of Mrs Sivyver, Clapham, Sussex, in February 1911.”
“I must live all alone”	“Taken down from the singing of H. Burstow, Horsham.”
“Miss Myrtle”	“Sung to me by H. Burstow, Horsham.”
“My rattl’ing mare and I”	“As sung to me by H. Burstow, Horsham.”
“Nobody coming to marry me”	“From the collection of Mr Lowdon, Abingdon.”
“The old broom-dasher”	“Taken down from the singing of a village engineer, at Glynde, near Lewes.”
“Ward the pirate”	“Sung to me by Green, road labourer, Angmering.”
“William and Mary”	“Sung to me by H. Burstow, Horsham. October 24th, 1911.”



STEPHEN MILLER  
VIENNA, 2011

