

# Manx Notes 153 (2013)

A.G. GILCHRIST (1863–1954)

## HER CORRESPONDENCE ON MANX FOLK SONG

Presented here is the extant correspondence of A.G. Gilchrist as concerned with Manx folk song. The earliest letters (four in number) are those between her and Sophia Morrison, the Pan Celtic activist, folklore and folk song collector, and editor of the small press magazine, *Mannin*. It was due to her contact with Morrison that she came to learn of the existence of the Clague Collection, the largest gathering of Manx vernacular song in existence, then and now. She was to go to edit it in large part in the *Journal of the Folk Song Society* in three numbers between 1924–26. Morrison died in 1917, and so the correspondence comes to an obvious end.

The next batch of letters, two only in number it must be said, are those from the Reverend John Kewley, the holder of Clague's personal papers and library that included what was later deposited in the then Manx Museum Library the four tune books making up what is commonly referred to as the Clague Collection. Whilst she worked with a transcript of the Clague Collection held by Morrison (it was Edmund Goodwin, Morrison's cousin, who did the effort of transcription), Kewley's importance was in bringing to light a large number seemingly of the original field notations of the tunes collected by Clague. This material has gone from sight (along with the rest of Clague's papers for that matter) but fortunately not before Gilchrist published the material in the *JFSS*.

Kewley was not the only helper to Gilchrist—another figure was Cyril I. Paton, better known as a naturalist, but who was a fluent speaker of Manx Gaelic and had a particular interest in *carvals*, locally-composed carols formerly sung on Christmas Eve in churches in the Island. There is just a single letter extant from Gilchrist; Paton's diary shows that there was a considerable correspondence between them, but these letters on both sides are now lost. Paton was later the editor of *Manx Calendar Customs* (1942) and Gilchrist was first approached as editor. She refused the rôle and her letter to M.M. Banks turning down the position found its way into Paton's hands and thereby into his personal papers. In the letter she mentions her editing of the Clague Collection and interestingly that she visited the Isle of Man in connection with her editorial activities, unfortunately not giving a date for this visit but still an interesting addition to what is known about the Clague Collection.

From 1931, we have a composite letter relating to an article submitted by Mona Douglas to the *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, published much later in 1937. This contains valuable information upon the Clague Collection and her opinion (negative it must be said) upon the editorial activities of W.H. Gill.

The next group of letters are those written to William Cubbon, the Curator and Librarian of the Manx Museum (four with one reply) in 1925–26; the letters from 1926, were found only by chance, pasted into the Manx Museum Library's own copy

of the Gilchrist edition. The final set of letters are an exchange in 1949, with the Director of the Manx Museum, B.R.S. Megaw. As ever, her letter provides important material for study, her editing of the Clague Collection as ever to the fore—she remains to this day the foremost editor of Manx vernacular song due to her work on this collection. To complete the material here, an appendix contains a note by her on the “Cruise of the Tiger,” possibly a working note for a letter.

The letters here are presented essentially as an archival edition: the intention is to place them in circulation and afford their use as research material. The editorial conventions are familiar ones and easily seen. It is hoped at a later date to fully edit the letters.

STEPHEN MILLER  
VIENNA, 2013



[I] **A.G. GILCHRIST TO SOPHIA MORRISON (3 OCTOBER 1915)**

P.S. I daresay your editorial eye has noticed two small errors in the noting of the jig—a crotchet which should be a quaver for the first note, and a minim which should be a crotchet in the last bar.

A.G.G.

Bazil Point | Hesketh Park | Southport | Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> 1915

Dear Miss Morrison,

Thank you for your kind letter and enclosures (which I presume I may keep (If not please let me know, and I will return them)). I was amused at your supposing that there was a Manxman on the Guardian staff! I am afraid I have been that Manxman on previous occasions also! Still I am greatly pleased that you were pleased with the little note on Mannin.

The tunes you send me are all interesting. I should be inclined to suppose that “Berry Dhone” was of Welsh origin—it is like a Welsh harp air. “Chee Stiagh Lesh ny Eastyn” is well known ‘all over’ in England as a stock ballad-tune. It is sung to many ballads, but is known best as “The Banks of Sweet Dundee”. When I am collecting, I generally begin by asking the potential singer if he or she has ever heard an old song called “The Banks of Sweet Dundee.” Very few haven’t—and it starts them off on the right track!

Of the three new Manx tunes for the next number of “Mannin,” the first is decidedly Irish in character, as you say. The mixed modes in it are curious but

characteristic. If I can trace it amongst Irish jigs, I will let you know. The second tune is a variant of an old tune sung to the “Lowlands of Holland”. I send you three versions which offer an interesting comparative study of the alterations which traditional tunes undergo. The version numbered “1”, from Hampshire, is nearest to your Manx one, but the other Hampshire one and the Irish form sound older than the major version of the tune. I think your // third tune (in pencil) may be yet another modern form of No. 2. There is certainly a strong resemblance, though it is, I think, a poorer form of the tune.

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. It was Miss Broadwood’s grandfather (or grand uncle) who was one of the pioneers of English folksong collecting—the Rev. John Broadwood. His small volume of Sussex Songs, printed in 1843 (I think), was I believe the first collection of English folk songs (apart from Christmas carols) ever published.

I am sorry to hear of your discouragement in trying to preserve the traditions of Manx music apart from printed collections. A similar want of knowledge, and therefore of interest, has resulted, since Miss Wakefield’s death, in the abandonment of the Folk Song Competition at the Westmoreland Musical Festival. It seems too bad that what is of real interest to the people can be so lightly dismissed as of “no educational value” by those who are supposed to be working for their interests.

Very sincerely yours | Anne G. Gilchrist

If you have objection I will submit the “jig” to my [*deleted word unreadable*] friend Mr. Frank Kidson, who has a good knowledge of Irish dance music. Don’t trouble to reply if you are agreeable.

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

## [2] A.G. GILCHRIST TO SOPHIA MORRISON (20 JANUARY 1916)

Bazil Point | Hesketh Park | Southport  
Jan 20th 1916

Dear Miss Morrison,

Many thanks for your good wishes, your most interesting letter, and your kind words about my little carol. It is a pleasure to feel that my most really musical friends have understood what I was aiming at in modelling it upon the carols of an earlier age—though neither tune nor stanza were consciously copied from anything in particular, though perhaps suggested by Elizabethan lyrics etc.

Your Manx news is very interesting. It is delightful to hear that Shimminis<sup>1</sup> is a working-man, and I shall look forward to seeing the play by the new Manx dramatist in print some day. //

How very dispiriting about the dropping of the Manx folk-music from the festival! I do sympathize very much with you in this set-back to your labours and endeavors; it must be most disheartening. But at any rate the work you have done cannot be undone by present-day apathy, and the young people who have learnt the Manx songs in their childhood will remember them in their old age, when let us hope, a wiser generation will treasure them.

I did not know of your “Manx Fairy Tales”—which I shall certainly procure. I am glad to have your confirmation of my supposition that the young foliage was taken to be the blaa—or “blow” as we might say in some English counties.

(Green yarrow, green yarrow, you bears a white ‘blow’) //

There is always some confusion about the “Twelfth Day of Christmas” and “Old Christmas Day.” Whitaker’s Almanac gives Jan 6th as Old Christmas Eve, and I went by him [(he may be wrong<sup>1</sup> though personally I should have called Twelfth Day (Jan 5) Old Xmas Eve and Jan 6th Old Christmas Day—being 12 whole days (from midnight) later than New Xmas Day. The vigils of feasts seem often to have got mixed up with the feasts themselves, and probably that accounts for Old Xmas Day being celebrated in Man on Jan 5th

My best congratulations on the new number of “Mannin”—an excellent number. “Billy the Dollan” is delightful, and a wonderful production for a child of fifteen. I haven’t finished reading the magazine yet, having been extra busy with domestic affairs since the last of // our Christmas visitors left. Your next number, I gather, will be a ‘knots’ as well as a ‘Knox’ number!

I shall love to avail myself of your delightful offer to lend me Dr Clague’s MS. collection. It is most kind, and I will take every care of the books while in possession

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<sup>1</sup> Presumably, she intended to write *Shimmin’s*

「of them.<sup>1</sup> I am particularly interested in singing-games 「(as well as “Carvals”)<sup>1</sup>—having a pretty extensive collection of my own. I noted a very interesting example in the autumn from a child in the Orphanage where I “teach the orphan girl to”—sing (not sew!)—a dramatic version of the old Scottish ballad of “The Cruel Mother” who kills the babe with a penknife “and “howkit a grave by the licht o’ the mune” (Did I tell you of this before?) I made a new version of it as a fairy tale for my brother’s four children to perform this Xmas—substituting a theft of

**Source:** Letter (partial) from A.G. Gilchrist to Sophia Morrison, 20 January 1916, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 5.

[3] **A.G. GILCHRIST TO SOPHIA MORRISON, UNDATED ([?1916])**

“From Miss A.G. Gilchrist, of the Folk Song Society, who also makes a special study of plant-lore: I find the Manx forms of English names very suggestive, e.g. pinkel, persal, and kennip, are so like the English fifteenth century forms, fenkyll, percil, and henep, as to suggest that these cultivated plants may have been introduced into Mann at that period. Perhaps the Stanleys imported parsley and fennel to eat with their Manx salmon, and the hemp for the purposes of justice—or injustice! I wonder whether you or any old Manx musician could give me any information respecting the singing of psalm and hymn tunes in the Manx churches in the olden days. I am trying to trace the date at which the air, which was first assigned to the tenor, came to be transferred to the treble. The change of course would come in gradually, later in primitive and remote communities than in those more in touch with contemporary musical developments, but I have found the air still in the tenor both in printed and ms. choir books up to about 1810 (and in a Welsh tune book as late as 1846), and no doubt some of these books would continue in use in conservative and out-of-the-way congregations till a much later date. The point is an interesting one because I think I have already identified one traditional carol tune (The First Nowell) as the treble part attached to an old “Christmas Hymn” tune. These treble parts, when tuneful, might be transmitted traditionally to a later generation by one of the treble singers and thus acquire an independent existence as new tunes.”

**Source:** Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to Sophia Morrison, undated [?1916], [known only from print; see, “Correspondence,” *Mannin* 7 (1916), 434–36.]

[4] **A.G. GILCHRIST TO SOPHIA MORRISON, UNDATED  
FRAGMENT (WITH ATTACHMENT?)**

Your Manx carval is very interesting—particularly the second air which (as I have noted for you) seems to be a traditional form of an old Scotch psalm-tune, in the unusual metre of “10’s”. (I looked up the carol and found it in the book I have.) Your first tune I cannot “spot”, but it has a strong flavour of Methodist hymn-tunes of the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> or beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I should hardly put it forth as a Manx air, I think. The Dorian air is the most characteristic, but it would be difficult to harmonize it in the character of the mode with acceptance to modern ears—I think the Dorian is of all modes the most difficult to treat—the sharp 6<sup>th</sup> is so remote from the modern tonality. It would also be difficult for your competitions (but this is perhaps would be no drawback for a test piece!)—at any rate I have had great difficulties in teaching modal tunes to people with quite good ears. I had a professional musician once who got quite off the rails in singing a Dorian tune unaccompanied to illustrate a paper I was giving! I do hope you will be able to carry through your Manx music classes. Just as a personal opinion, I think I should try to find something equally “Manx” but not quite so archaic as the carvel tune 2 for your test, while yet it seems a pity to descend upon the more modern version No 3.

Yours sincerely Annie G. Gilchrist.

**Source:** Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to Sophia Morrison, undated fragment (with attachment?), MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 1.

[5] **ARCHDEACON KEWLEY TO A.G. GILCHRIST (14 MAY 1923)**

14<sup>th</sup> May 1923.

Dear Miss Gilchrist,

Many thanks for your kindness in sending me a copy of “The Choir” containing your very interesting article on Border Minstrelsy in the Appalachians. It is a pity that there is no place where we can look for our originals. I was wondering why the old man wished to be buried under the hearth-stone.

I think you may care to see the enclosed original copy of “O cholb ec shea” in Manx National Music. Dr Clague was much displeased with Mr. Gill’s treatment of it. I have made a note of all I ever heard about it, and I would like to know what you think of it, and if you consider it a survival of one of the old church tunes. I presume that it is Pre-Reformation. I infer this from the words.

We are having severe winter weather here at present. One Saturday evening the garden was quite white after a hailstone as heavy as any I have seen for years. This evening it is flooded with rain. I was at Ramsey but managed to get home before the heavy down pour set in. On account of my rheumatism I am longing for warmer weather. At times still writing is very difficult, and I have much of it to do at present by way of examination papers, preparation for Convocation of which I have been Secretary nearly 30 years, Trusts &c.

With kind regards, | Yours very sincerely, | J.Kewley | Archdeacon of Man  
Miss Gilchrist, | Walnut Bank, | Lancaster.

**Source:** Letter from Archdeacon Kewley to A.G. Gilchrist, 14 May 1923, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House, A.G. Gilchrist Bequest, AGG/1/37.

[6] **A.G. GILCHRIST TO WILLIAM CUBBON (14 MARCH 1925)**

File | sent with Bks 23/3/25<sup>2</sup>

March 14<sup>th</sup> 1925

Dear Mr. Cubbon,

I hope you were pleased with Part I of the Manx numbers of the Folk Song Journal, as I have not yet heard what my Manx friends think of it, though English ones and members of the F.S. Society seem to have found it very interesting. (You would no doubt receive a copy direct from the printers). Besides the carvals, I find there will be some additional matter really belonging to Part I (which has since come to hand) to be printed as part of Part II. I wonder if anyone in Douglas is sufficiently interested to give me a little help through your own kind offices as custodian of // the late Mr. G. Wood's collections? Mr. Cyril Paton tells me that in Leech's Guide, and Elizabeth Cookson's 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (amongst Mr. Wood's books) there is a version of the tune of "Mylecharane" which differs from the one generally known, and that when Mr. Wood hummed this Leech's Guide tune over, it seemed to Mr. Paton to be one he had heard as a child in Kirk Michael. If any musical friend would be so kind as to copy this tune out for me from either of the sources named, I should be very greatly obliged, as I shall have a further note on "Mylecharane" in Part II. (Mr. Paton has very kindly sent me the number of the Natural History etc Societys "Proceedings" containing his article on this song.) It is only the melody which I require // if the tune should be harmonized or arranged in the book, so I hope will

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<sup>2</sup> In the hand of William Cubbon.

not involve much time or trouble. Hoping very much that you will not be too busy to help me, and that you approve of the work upon which I have been engaged

Yours sincerely | Anne G. Gilchrist

**Source:** Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to William Cubbon 14 March 1925, MNHL, MS 5424/[1] A.

[7] **A.G. GILCHRIST TO WILLIAM CUBBON (25 MARCH 1925)**

March 25<sup>th</sup> 1925

Dear Mr. Cubbon,

Very many thanks for your kindness in entrusting the two scarce and valuable books to me for a few days—I will not keep them longer, and will return them as soon as ever I have transcribed what I require from them.

Thank you also for your kind words about the Manx number. I am very glad to hear the Manx Museum & Library is to become a subscriber. The Manx collection completes the trio of Scottish-Gaelic, Irish-Gaelic, and Manx Gaelic song-collection in the Journal, and should be of value to // students in the days to come.

I forget whether I told you that some fragmentary texts have been fortunately turned up, in Dr Clague's hand-writing, though imperfect, they serve to identify the subjects of a good many of the text less titles & tunes in No 28, and there have been some very odd surprises, as the Manx title—often taken from an interior verse of the ballad—had been no clue till one discovered the context, when recognition was sometimes immediate—'the broken token' being produced, as in the ballad, and the disguise suddenly penetrated!

So there will be some interesting addenda for No 29, as well as the carval matter. With many thanks again for your most kind and valued help

Yours sincerely | Anne G. Gilchrist

**Source:** Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to William Cubbon, 25 March 1925, MNHL, MS 5424/[2] A.



[8] A.G. GILCHRIST TO WILLIAM CUBBON (28 MARCH 1925)

March 28<sup>th</sup> 1925

Dear Mr. Cubbon

I now return the two books so very kindly lent to me, with very best thanks. I am sure you will be glad to have them safely back again!

I shall have to make it clear in No 29 that Eliza Cookson was not one of Dr Clague's singers! (There was no indication of the fact in the MS, or anything to distinguish her name as attached to the tune from that of Tom Kermodé—for example.) //

Miss Broadwood has kindly lent me some other helpful books, not easily to be seen, and I hope to clear up the bad fit of tune & words of "Thurot & Elliot" in Moore's collection by showing that the tune really belongs to a 'another' version in a different metre! No time for more, as I am taking this to town to register the parcel. It should have been sent yesterday, but we were engaged with friends all day.

Thanking you again, and with // kind regards

Yours sincerely | Anne G. Gilchrist

**Source:** Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to William Cubbon, 28 March 1925, MNHL, MS 5424/[3] A.

[9] ARCHDEACON KEWLEY TO A.G. GILCHRIST (26 MAY 1925)

Andreas Rectory, Ramsey, Isle of Man  
26<sup>th</sup> May 1925.

Dear Miss Gilchrist,

I have managed today to get a paramilitary canter over the field and as I shall now be held up again for some days I think it is better to send you the MS and let you see what I have been able to do so far.

It is a difficult job. To correct all the Manx would take a long time. Some words I cannot as yet make out, and most of the constructions are charmingly independent of rules of grammar. Later on, however, I hope I may be able to revise the lot.

As you want material without further delay it will be best for you to send back to me the sheets continuing what you want to use at once. I shall try to give them special and early attention and ask Mr. Paton to lend a hand. He has read more of the carvals and ballads that I have been able to read, and probably he would spot at once words that puzzle me.

“Shepherd, the weather is misty” seems familiar to me but I cannot trace it. It is marvellous that you have been able to trace so many.

I trust that what I have managed may be of some service to you, and that you will let me know as early as convenient the verses which you are anxious to deal at once. I shall do my best not to disappoint you.

Yours very sincerely, | JKewley | Archdeacon  
Miss Gilchrist, | Walnut Bank, | Lancaster.

**Source:** Letter from Archdeacon Kewley to A.G. Gilchrist, 26 May 1925, MNHL, MS 09505 C.I. Paton Papers, Box 5.

**[10] A.G. GILCHRIST TO C.I. PATON (28 DECEMBER 1925)**

December 28<sup>th</sup> | 1925

Dear Mr. Paton,

I have arrived home after 4 days' absence to find a large batch of proofs awaiting attention. We have come back to find visitors already arrived, & I shall not be able to touch it myself for 2 days at least, but I am sending the whole thing on to you hoping you may be able to make any necessary corrections on the Manx texts & notes \* & return them [all] to me as speedily as possible // You may ignore anything needing correction in the English matter, as I shall have time to attend to this when I get the proofs back from you—but it will save you having to go through the whole mass, and so save time (and your own trouble. I am sending it registered. Please return it the same way. In great haste—and hoping I am not inconveniencing you by dumping it on you at this unconscionable time of the year!—

Yours very sincerely | Anne G. Gilchrist

**Source:** Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to C.I. Paton, 28 December 1925, MNHL, MS 09505 C.I. Paton Papers, Box 5.

**[11] COMPOSITE REMARKS AND COMMENTS BY A.G. GILCHRIST (1931)**

Remarks and comments by Miss Gilchrist

I warn you to beware of any of W.H. Gill's versions of Manx airs! When I edited the Clague collection, I was not 'out' to expose him, but when I had a copy of the M.S.

before me from which nearly all his (Gill's) tune were derived, I discovered how greatly he had tampered with and misconstrued some of these originals,—in spite of his denials of such tamperings except in one or two specified cases out of a much larger number. From ignorance of the words belonging to the tunes, misapprehension of their titles, and absence of directions as to speed, many of the airs were treated quite wrongly in his two collections of Manx music.

There are two examples of this in the “Frog Dance; Return the Blow,” and in the “Fairy Reel.” If you will look at the Frog Dance fragment in the Folk Song Journal, No. 28, p.171, you will see the actual source of the tune, which Gill has turned into a polka, and which is really in old jig measure, triple-time (though wrongly barred by Dr. Clague) with a running rhythm of quavers. My version of the “Return the Blow” dance must have been influenced by this transformation and the music played for it to the “tum-tum-TUM” polka-rhythm.

Take next Gill's version of Neil Gow's well-known “Fairy Dance” reel, which (from the Clague M.S.) is noted in 2/4 time, and marked Allegretto by Gill. If Miss Douglas' “Fairy Reel” goes to Gill's version, its character also has // been destroyed.



Gill gives it:



with a Manx title “Dauns in my Ferishyn,” which is simply translated from its English one. I have heard Gow's tune used for northern Sword dancers,—it is a very good one for the purpose.

As for the “Mylecharana's<sup>3</sup> March,” marches in triple time are rare to begin with, and I should not say this was of any antiquity, or even traditional.

“Keep the old petticoat warm” is, I am sure a printed air, as I know the title, though so far I have not found it. I think it is an Irish jig.

There seems to have been some confusion between the tune for the “Return the blow” dance and the “Frog Dance,” as is evident from Dr. Clague's title. Perhaps the tune served for both. See my note on p.321 of No. 30 of the F.S. Journal (Vol. vii, pt 5). I should suggest that the description of “Return the blow” which Miss Douglas then gave me might be reprinted instead of the more elaborate one since furnished. // Since the actual steps cannot be technically described, a general description would

<sup>3</sup> A typing error for *Mylecharane*

perhaps be sufficient, as given there. The same remark might perhaps apply elsewhere in the account of these interesting dances.

I have found the Sword (Dirk?) Dance tune, almost note for note, as the “Lullaby of the Water Horse” in the Tolmie collection which I helped to edit for the F.S. Journal in 1910–11. It would be of considerable interest to know whether Miss Douglas obtained this tune from a traditional source, and from a person who had learnt it traditionally. The Gaelic song about the water horse is obviously old, and Miss Tolmie took it down from her maid, Mary Ross, a native of Skye, in 1887. It is very curious to find it practically note for note as a sword dance tune in the Isle of Man, without words or, apparently, a title, as one would not expect it to have been introduced into the Island from Skye at any recent period. Perhaps Miss Douglas can throw some light upon it.

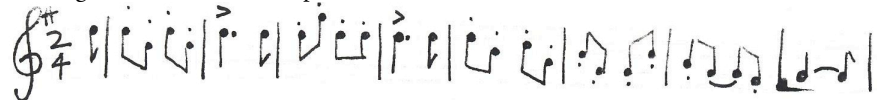
I forgot to say that I have corrected in pencil on the typed M.S. Miss Douglas’ statement that Dr. Clague noted “a similar fragment” to the one used by W.H. Gill as the basis of his “polka.” Without doubt it was the identical fragment. I have seen Dr. Clague’s first pencilled copy, and transcribed this note for note (only correcting the barring) in the F.S. Journal. This old jig rhythm has often // been wrongly barred, even in the printed collections, as the only strong accent is on the first of the bar, so that the note often gets lost in the barring. Here is a Scotia example (correctly barred):



o that where Dr. Clague wrote:



arranging the notes as I have indicated above the staff, it seems to me quite evident that that tune should be barred as I have indicated below the staff. But Gill evidently could make nothing of Clague’s fragment as it stood, and therefore altered it this (dotting the crotchets) into a polka measure:



adding a second part even more of his own invention.

So there is no question about Gill’s method of restoring “symmetry” as he called it to tunes he did not understand And I have gone into details in this instance to make it quite clear that the revived dance is performed to a tune by W.H. Gill distorted from a fragment noted by Dr. Clague, and therefore not in any true sense traditional

at all. Magna est veritas,—even when unpalatable. // Mystery only increases when one enquires into the custom of “Cutting off the Fiddler’s Head.” according to 18th century writers (Waldron, who published a Description of the Isle of Man in 1934, and Entick, who issued a description of the British Empire in 1774) this was a Twelfth Day game. According to Entick (who perhaps derives his account from Waldron) the twelve days of Christmas were a holiday, every parish providing fiddlers at the public charge of young people, who spent the nights in dancing. On Twelfth Day,—the last day of Yule,—the fiddler laid his head in one of the woman’s laps and so became an oracle, answering the questions whom each girl in the company shall marry as out to him,—the company having absolute confidence in his predictions. “This they call Cutting off the Fiddlers’ Head, for after this he is dead for the whole year.”

I enclose a version of the “Hunt the Wren” tune, of which there are many variants. (You will see there is nothing polka like about it.) The Mummers’ Song “Ree, ben shen Tammy” and the satiric song “Skeezley Breesley”<sup>4</sup> (Bride Parish) are both in the same running jig-measures as Dr. Clague’s “Frog Dance” which shows that this old dance rhythm was familiar in the Isle of Man. Dr. Clague’s tune had fragments of words attached to it, but the best Manx scholars I know failed to make sense of them, and though I printed them in an Appendix to the Clague Collection, Mr. Cyril Paton, I think, was // inclined to see in them an insulting challenge to fight! It seems to me possible that there was a fighting Frog dance in which two men sparred at each other while crouching in their ‘hunkers’ (as we say in Scotland), like the similar trussed cock fights, in which one man tried to knock the other off his balance. Clague’s fragment as written remained in M.S. until I edited the collection for the F.S. Journal.

Unfortunately, Gill’s “Manx National Music” seems to have been accepted as gospel by the Manx people; there is a ~~national~~ <sup>‘altered to read natural’</sup> tendency (outside folk song collection!) to view any printed form of an air as the ‘correct’ one, and his book has been in use since 1898, quite long enough for his tunes to have become popular and in general use even “twenty years ago,” when I think Miss Douglas remembers a performance of “Return the Blow.” (“Bouill backer (Hit him back) is Dr. Clague’s pencilled name for the tune.

**Source:** “Remarks and comments by Miss Gilchrist”, typescript commetns forwarded with letter from Douglas Kennedy to Mona Douglas, 19 February 1931, MNHL, MS 09545, Mona Douglas Papers, Box 15, [Folder] English Folk Dance Society. **Note:** This must relate to Mona Douglas, “Manx Folk Dances: their Notation and Revival,” *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* iii.2 (1937): 110–16. Evidently, the article was published much later after the correspondence that it

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<sup>4</sup> Properly, *Skeeylley Breeshey*.

entailed; for those letters, see Douglas Kennedy to Mona Douglas, 19 February 1931; W.D. Croft to Mona Douglas 23 February [1931]; 22 March [1931].

[12] A.G. GILCHRIST TO M.M. BANKS (18 MAY 1935)

[*embossed address*] WALNUT BANK, | LANCASTER.

May 18<sup>th</sup> 1935

Dear Miss Banks,

The projected Folk Lore Calendar sounds most delightful, and I am only sorry that it is not possible for me to embark upon any new editing, my hands being so full of folk-song and archaeological work and musical researches.

I am not a Manxwoman, & indeed have only been in the Island once, & when I was editing the late Dr Clague's Manx folksongs for the Folk Song Society. I was indebted to have Manx correspondents—Archdeacon Kewley, Mr. P.W. Caine, and others—for a good deal of my folk-lore notes surrounding some of the 'custom' songs; & for the rest was to the Manx Journal Mannin, to C. Roeder's Manx Notes & Queries (1904) and to Dr Clague's Manx Reminiscences. I can but commend these sources, together with William // Cashen's Manx Folk Lore <sup>†(1912)</sup><sup>1</sup> and Moore's Folk-Lore of the Isle of Man to anybody who is able to tackle this department of Calendar lore. One thing I should warn any editor against (he will find it dealt with in ~~the~~ 'my' notes to the 'Custom' songs in the ~~Mx~~ Clague Collection (which occupied three parts of Vol VII of the Folk Song Journal (viz: Dec 1924 to August 1926) is the word "Unnysup"—supposed to be a native Manx Christmas custom—which is really the north country "hunspoping" (ie "hunt's-up"-ing) introduced into Mann. It was an old Lakeland custom of visiting houses in the early hours of Christmas morning, playing the "hunt's-up" tune, of calling up the various members of the household by name to acknowledge the good wishes of the "hunsoppers" who afterwards ~~returned to~~ collected their gifts... With such material in their hands there are, I am sure, others fully as competent—or more so—to deal with the seasonal customs of the Island. He <sub>1</sub>(the postulated editor!)<sub>1</sub> should // not overlook the 'flowering of the myrrh' on Old Christmas Eve—a belief connected with the blossoming of the Glastonbury thorn at the same period, but as regards then myrrh (Myrrhis odorata) not known, as far as I am aware, outside the Island.

I am so sorry not to be able to attempt the work myself, but I am quite an elderly person now, and find I cannot work the whole time unresting, as it was my pleasure to do when I was younger, though I still approach the custom as nearly as mental & physical capacity permit!

Yours sincerely | Anne G. Gilchrist

The connection of the Stanleys with the Isle of Man certainly introduced Lancashire customs into the Island, besides the Manx-Gaelic survivals which would be suitable [*deleted word*] for inclusion as “Scottish.” The elements of Manx lore are a strange mixture of nationalities.

**Source:** Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to M.M. Banks, 18 May 1935, MNHL, MS 09050, C.I. Paton Papers, Box 4.

[13] B.R.S. MEGAW TO A.G. GILCHRIST (3 JUNE 1949)

COPY OF HANDWRITTEN LETTER

June 3rd, 1949

Dear Madam,

I noticed with interest a short contribution by you to the Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Dec. 1947 (v, 2), p.93, giving a variant of the Cruel Ship’s Carpenter tune under the heading “Collin Brush: the Dew that flies over the Mulberry Tree”.

As “The Dew ... Tree” is the refrain of the words of a “New ditty of Douglass”, in that year I wondered if there was any likelihood that “Collin’s” was a misreading of “Cowl’s”? The tune is not preserved, only the words, with the curious refrain. As a notice in the General Evening Post (London) Jan. 19, 1790, refers to Cowil (or Cowle) as commonly called the “Manks Musician, and well known to great numbers of seamen &c on the Northern Coast ...” he might have been sufficiently known to give his name to the tune. This is, of course, a pure guess on my part and I only write as I know of your interest in Manx songs. I am not versed in the subject myself, so would be glad of your advice if you have time to write.

Yours truly, | B.R.S.M.

Miss A.G. Gilchrist | c/o Eng. Folk Dance Song Soc. | 2 Regents Park Rd, | London, N.W.1

**Source:** Typescript copy letter (with handwritten additions) from B.R.S. Megaw to A.G. Gilchrist, 3 June 1949, MNHL, Manx Museum and Library backfiling of roughly sorted correspondence.

## [14] A.G. GILCHRIST TO WILLIAM CUBBON (8 JUNE 1949)

June 8<sup>th</sup> 1949

Dear Mr. Megaw,

Without preface except the statement that in my 87<sup>th</sup> year, and with failing sight \*  
 [\* the results of which are obvious<sup>1</sup> I can no more find references (except perhaps as  
 to my character!) as easily as I used to do; but trusting to memory, I should say that  
 “Collins’ Bank” seems to have been by John Collins (d. 1808) actor and poet, who  
 gave a popular ~~who gave a popular~~ anecdotal and vocal entertainment in London &  
 the provinces, 177—1793. Possibly you may find <sup>in</sup> the D.N.B. that he called this his  
 “Brush” (?meaning items brushed <sup>up</sup> together from various sources. Otherwise I  
 cannot explain it. These items may well have included the folksong with the refrain

“As the dew (?doo = dove) flies over the mulberry tree.”

This had the interlinear refrains:

“Gilly flower [gennifer} gentle’ and rosemary <sup>r</sup>rosemeree<sup>l</sup>

and

“As the doo flies over the mulberry tree.”

(There is an article on herb refrains in the F.S.J. many years back).

I think the “Gentles” of Douglas must have been suggested by this.

[Juniper ‘gentle’ [a mild herb?] //

The “gentles of Douglas” would be sung to a variant of the familiar tune  
 presumably used by John Collins (or Cowell) for there was also a ~~John~~ Samuel  
 Cowell, an actor and favourite comic singer ‘between acts’ (1820—64.) The tune has a  
 dancing rhythm and variants are familiar in folk-song.

I think honest students of Manx songs should know that great liberties were taken  
 with them by W.H. Gill in his Manx music and Manx songs and many of the tunes  
 were given their original English titles by Dr Clague, a transcript of whose collection  
 was lent to me before I edited [*two words erased unreadable*] the music for the [?  
 English] Folk Song Society. The tune for The Harvest of the Sea is simply a variant  
 of the familiar “Banks of Sweet Dundee” on the old folk pattern of A.B.B.A. and  
 when editing the Folk Song Society’s selection I omitted many tunes—like “Poor  
 Old Horse”—<sup>r</sup>with<sup>l</sup> which I was familiar in English folk song. The worst  
 malappropriation <sup>r</sup>by W.H.G.<sup>l</sup> was the tune selected for Hood’s words “We watched  
 her breathing through the night—a song about a dying girl.

While the transcript of the Clague ms. was in Miss Morrison’s hands she lent it to  
 me—the original not being available, as its possessor (whoever it was) would not let  
 it out of his hands. And I had the loan of Miss Morrison’s copy while preparing my  
 article for // the Folk Song Journal, and duly returned it to her. While I had it I was  
 able to identify a good many tunes under English names, and added these  
 identifications and titles in my own copies of Manx National Songs and Manx



National Music. These I recently presented to the E.F.D.S., so as to be available more easily to researchers than if I retained them myself. These identifications ~~were~~ <sup>are</sup> all in red ink, together with their alternative titles. A small number of other Manx songs—not I think from Dr Clagues' ms. were contributed by me to a later issue of the Journal.

The Rev. E. White has in preparation a complete catalogue of the titles of all the tunes contributed to the Journal from its first issue—a most valuable piece of work.

I should be glad to hear of any of my former colleagues in such researches and [*unreadable word*], still alive. I know, of course, that Archdeacon Kewley and Miss Sophia Morrison <sup>are gone</sup><sup>1</sup>—but hope Mr. Paton is still working, and others with whom I used to correspond. Some of these might be interested to know that in more recent years I was admitted a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries <sup>(P.S.A.)</sup><sup>1</sup> (~~which only in more recent years~~ (It was founded by George II in an age when a woman's sex alone excluded her) and eighteen months ago was given the O.B.E. in recognition of my work for “folksong music”—as rather baldly expressed.

Yours very sincerely | Anne G. Gilchrist

**Source:** Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to William Cubbon, 8 June 1949, MNHL, Manx Museum and Library backfiling of roughly sorted correspondence. **Note:** The square brackets here outside of editorial marking are as in the original.

[15] **B.R.S. MEGAW TO A.G. GILCHRIST (14 JULY 1949)**

MD/I–M

July 14th, 1949

Dear Miss Gilchrist,

I was very glad indeed to get your letter of June 8th, and am sorry that I have been prevented from replying earlier. It was very kind of you to go to so much trouble in answering my note, and your letter is of the greatest interest to all of us here.

You will be sorry to know that Mr. Paton was killed in a road accident in May of this year. Mr. Cubbon is still very active, although he is now 84. We offer you our warm congratulations on the award of the O.B.E. for your work for Folk Music. Manx people feel particularly pleased about this.

With kindest regards, | Yours sincerely, | Director  
Miss A.G. Gilchrist, O.B.E. F.S.A., | Walnut Bank, | Lancaster

**Source:** Typescript copy letter from B.R.S. Megaw to A.G. Gilchrist, 14 July 1949, MNHL, Manx Museum and Library backfiling of roughly sorted correspondence.

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## APPENDIX

Note on “The Cruise of the Tiger.” Working draft of a letter? Undated [1933 or later], VWML, Cecil Sharp House, A.G. Gilchrist Bequest, Box 10, AGG/10/223 D.

Cruise of the Tiger

The tune is a variant of the English sea-song The Rainbow or “As we were a-sailing out by the Spanish shore.” [see Kidson’s *Traditional Tunes*! A.P. Graves’ verses are much more sophisticated and clever than the original ballad, given in Manx [in Deemster Moore’s Manx Ballads! with an English metrical but unrhymed version to fit the time. There is no refrain. Moore’s tune for it is the second half of the “Drogh Vraane” Carol—evidently the singer had forgotten the part of the tune. In consequence he [(Moore)! prints half the verse as a quatrain, whereas it [(the ballad)! is in 16 double verses, not 32 single ones. You need to go very warily with W.H. Gill’s Manx music! Many of the tunes to which he gives Manx titles are noted in the Clague MS. under [familiar! English ones only. But it was surely sheer ignorance that made W.H. Gill set an [English! song about the deathbed of a young girl to the jovial tune of “Push about the Jorum!”

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## THE A.G. GILCHRIST CORRESPONDENCE

SENDER	RECIPIENT	DATE	SOURCE
A.G. Gilchrist	Sophia Morrison	3 October 1915	MS 09495, Box 1
A.G. Gilchrist	Sophia Morrison	20 January 1916	MS 09495, Box 5
A.G. Gilchrist	Sophia Morrison	Undated [1916?] *	<i>Mannin</i> , 7 (1916), 435.
A.G. Gilchrist	Sophia Morrison	Undated **	MS 09495, Box 1
* Extract only. ** Fragment [with attachment?].			
Rev. John Kewley	A.G. Gilchrist	14 May 1923	VWML, AGG/1/37
Rev. John Kewley	A.G. Gilchrist	26 May 1925	MS 09505, Box 5
A.G. Gilchrist	William Cubbon	14 March 1925	MS 5424/[1] A
A.G. Gilchrist	William Cubbon	25 March 1925	MS 5424/[2] A
A.G. Gilchrist	William Cubbon	28 March 1925	MS 5424/[3] A
A.G. Gilchrist	C.I. Paton	28 December 1925	MS 09505, Box 5
Manx Museum Trustees	A.G. Gilchrist	12 April 1926	J48/19/[1]
A.G. Gilchrist	William Cubbon	15 April 1926	J48/19/[2]
Douglas Kennedy *	Mona Douglas	19 February 1931	MS 09545, Box 15
* Forwards a composite letter of “Remarks and Comments” by AGG.			
A.G. Gilchrist	M.M. Banks	18 May 1935	MS 09505, Box 4
B.R.S. Megaw	A.G. Gilchrist *	3 June 1949	MML (BF) / 1949
A.G. Gilchrist	B.R.S. Megaw	8 June 1949	MML (BF) / 1949
B.R.S. Megaw	A.G. Gilchrist *	14 June 1949	MML (BF) / 1949
* Copy letter.			

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