

Manx Notes 184 (2014)

“USHAG MOOAR KIONE MAEL”

SONGS IN IMITATION OF BIRDS (A NOTE) *

“A man named Cleator told me of a song which used to be sung by the fishermen, called ‘Ushag mooar Kione Mael’ in which there was a chorus imitating the cry of the gannet, & the singers dug each other in the ribs, as if pecking. He had forgotten the words, however.” This was in Bride on the 19 June 1924, to be precise, taken from that day’s entry in Cyril I. Paton’s personal diary.¹ This is a title new to the Manx song repertoire and it is unfortunate that Paton’s informant did not know the words to it. He did, however, know of the gestures to be played out when the song was being performed. The date too is of interest, showing that collecting of song material was still possible, reinforced by the known collecting of Mona Douglas in this same period. An undated notebook compiled by A.W. Moore and titled by him “Manx ‘Odds & Ends’”² contains material that in part was later to appear in *Manx Ballads and Music* (1896). There are two items here that need to be followed up: “Imitation of Songs of birds by Tommy Cormode” (pp. 61–62) and “Imitation of Bird’s Songs” (pp. 159e–f). Incidentally, Cormode was later to be one of Sophia Morrison’s own informants.

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* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “‘Ushag Mooar Kione Mael’: Songs in Imitation of Birds (A Note),” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* February (2014), [5]. Reproduced here with sources.

¹ Entry for 19 June 1924, personal diary kept by Cyril I. Paton, in private hands.

² “Manx ‘Odds & Ends’.” Notebook compiled by A.W. Moore, undated. MNHL, MS 221 A.