

Manx Notes 189 (2014)

“CAR YN COOAG” (‘THE CUCKOO SONG’) *

The collecting of Manx song by Sophia Morrison remains to be fully researched. There is as yet not even a catalogue of the various song mss. to be found amongst her own papers as well as those that passed to Josephine Kermode, the Manx poet “Cushag.” Reproduced below is “Car yn Cooag” (‘The Cuckoo Song’) to serve as an example of the richness of her collecting—see (2) for detail of the performance of the song recorded by her. In (3) she has copied onto the ms. a note from her correspondence, in this case with Dr John Clague.

STEPHEN MILLER
VIENNA, 2014

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THE SONG TEXTS

(1) Car yn Cooag

Kook, Kook, peep, peep, dooyrt yn cooag veg veen,
Cre’n aght cadle oo choud er y tourey wooin.

Source: Untitled and undated sheet in the hand of Sophia Morrison, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Paper, Box 6.

(2) Car yn Cooag

Arrane ny clean

The Cuckoo Song. A Cradle Song is another song gleaned from a Dalby man. He remembers his grandmother an old woman of 80 at the time—who knew no word of English to the day of his death—singing it to him, 50 years ago or more, when he was a tiny child. When the old woman sang ‘Kook, kook, peep, peep,’ she rapped her knuckles here and there on the table. He seems to think that this couplet, all he can remember now, came as a refrain after each verse. It is such a quaint beautiful fragment one feels sorry there is not more of it.

Kook, Kook, peep, peep; dooyrt yn cooag veg veen.
Cre’n aght cadle oo choud er y tourey wooin?

* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “‘Car yn Cooag’ (‘The Cuckoo Song’),” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* June (2014), [7]–[8]. Reproduced here with sources.

“Kook, Kook, peep, peep,” said the dear little cuckoo.
Why has thou slept so long on the summer from us?

Source: “Manx Fragments of Music,” undated sheet in the hand of Sophia Morrison, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Paper, Box 6.

(3)

Car Yn Cooag
Cuckoo Song

l : : d' | s :-: m, r | d :-: r | m :-: s, .s | s :-: m | s :- f: m | r :-: a | d :-:— |

‘Kook, kook, peep, peep,’ dooyrt yn Cooag veg veen,
‘Cre’n aght cadle oo choud er y tourey woin?’

“The “Car y Cooag”, is very pretty as you took it down from the Dalby fisherman and I think it should not be altered. It was never sung as a “round” by Manxmen ... The cuckoo at the beginning of the season sings in the “late” key—a minor third. – d : l : as the season goes on she sings a major third – m : d : later on she sings a little sharper than a major third—this is a diminished fourth. – fe : d : and at the end of the season a perfect fourth – f : d :’

Source: “Folk Lore Notes,” undated sheet in the hand of Sophia Morrison, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Paper, Box 6. With passage copied from a letter date unknown from Dr John Clague to Morrison.

