

## Manx Notes 191 (2014)

“MISS TODD,” “MISS M.L. WOOD,”  
AND “MISS MCKNIGHT.” \*

Deemster J.F. Gill wrote to his brother W.H. Gill on 8 July 1895, “I return the M.S. with some rough notes made when Miss Todd played them [music] for me.”<sup>1</sup> The manuscript was a transcript of the tunes the brothers had collected together earlier that year and it was evident that the Deemster could not read music and so “Miss Todd” was pressed into service. She was not the only women to play a role in this regard. A.W. Moore was assisted as he acknowledged in *Manx Ballads and Music* by “Miss M.L. Wood”<sup>2</sup> and “Miss McKnight.”<sup>3</sup>

Miss Todd was Rhoda Todd, aged 52 in the 1891 census and the principal of a private school at “Cleveland” in Woodbourne Place, Douglas.<sup>4</sup> She was English but her niece, Margaret Quiggin, born in Douglas, was a pupil there so she had a Manx connection through a marriage in the family. The school had ten pupils, four of whom had been born in India, one in England, and the remaining five were from the Island. Besides herself as principal there were three governesses, one born in Brazil though a British subject. A cook and a domestic servant made up the rest of the staff.

Mary Louise Wood was the prime arranger of the tunes that appeared in the book. Aged 51 in the 1891 census, she was enumerated as an “Organist & Choir Trainer,” living at 1 Osborne Terrace in Douglas and sharing the house there with Annette Valentine Wood, 62, a widow and “Certified Pianoforte Teacher.”<sup>5</sup> Both were born in London. She died in 1925, the *Peel City Guardian* recording that “[t]hough not Manx by birth Miss Wood was essentially Manx in sentiment, and all her compositions are influenced by that sentiment.”<sup>6</sup>

Edith Lilian McKnight was not in the Island for the 1891 census but was recorded there in 1901.<sup>7</sup> She was 39 years old, born in England, a self-employed music teacher, renting two rooms as a boarder in the Teare household, a family of blacksmiths living at “Beach View” in Douglas Street, Castletown. She was, however, sufficiently

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Deemster J.F. Gill to W.H. Gill, 8 July 1895, MNHL, MS 09702, Deemster J.F. Papers, Box 2.

<sup>2</sup> A.W. Moore, *Manx Ballads and Music* (Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896) xxxv.

<sup>3</sup> Moore, *Manx Ballads and Music* xxxv. See fn. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Census Enumerators’ Book* for Douglas, 1891, RG 12/4689, fol. 78, sch. 92.

<sup>5</sup> *Census Enumerators’ Book* for Douglas, 1891, RG 12/4689, fol. 57, sch. 8.

<sup>6</sup> “Death of M.L. Wood,” *Peel City Guardian* 10 January 1925. For a biographical notice of the so-named “Mother of Manx Music,” Fenella Bazin, “Wood, Mary Louisa (1839–1925),” *New Manx Worthies*, ed. Dollin Kelly (Douglas: Manx Heritage Foundation, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> *Census Enumerators’ Book* for Douglas, 1901, RG 13/5308, fol. 135, sch. 20.

well regarded as a musician to be drawn into assisting the work on *Manx Ballads and Music*.<sup>8</sup>

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VIENNA, 2014

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REFERENCES

- Anon. "Death of M.L. Wood." *Peel City Guardian* 10 January 1925: [6]d.  
Bazin, Fenella. "Wood, Mary Louisa (1839–1925)." *New Manx Worthies*. Ed. Dollin Kelly. Douglas: Manx Heritage Foundation, 2006. 471–72.  
Moore, A.W. *Manx Ballads and Music*. Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896.

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<sup>8</sup> [This comment was written without having come across the research undertaken by the Sophie Drinker Institut. She was indeed a highly-qualified musician, her background detailed in Christine Fornoff, "McKnight, Edith (Lilian)" (2009), online Lexikon <[www.sophie-drinker-institut.de](http://www.sophie-drinker-institut.de)>.]