

Manx Notes 201 (2015)

ANNE GEDDES GILCHRIST

“INTRODUCTION TO ADDITIONAL TEXTS AND FRAGMENTS” *

SONGS FROM THE ISLE OF MAN

(PART II)

(1925)

[ix] At the time when *Journal* No. 28 (Part i of this collection) was printed, it was believed that the words belonging to most of the tunes noted by Dr Clague were unhappily lost for ever. But last spring (1925), by a most fortunate accident Archdeacon Kewley discovered in an old exercise-book, formerly in Dr Clague's possession, which had been used in preparing the catalogue of an *Industrial and Art Loan Exhibition* in Castletown, a number of pencilled fragments in Dr Clague's handwriting. These proved to be the first verses and other fragments of most of the songs whose tunes the doctor had recorded separately in the mss. from which the selections in Part i were drawn. The label-title of the exhibition catalogue still remained on the outside of the note-book, but the catalogue pages (“Section A. Archaeology”) had been torn out, and the real contents proved to be of far greater value to posterity, for the doctor had utilised the blank pages left to jot down the words of the songs obtained from his singers.¹

At the time when Dr Clague noted the tunes his acquaintance with Manx-Gaelic was still slight, and in consequence his partly phonetic first transcriptions of what his folk-singers sang are occasionally on a par with the Irish of the song “Callino casturame.” In editing these texts my own part has simply been to disentangle and identify the different fragments—which are roughly pencilled without headings—and to transcribe them *verbatim et literatim* to the best of my ability, leaving untouched both spelling and punctuation.

One point, however, may be noted. Prof. Strachan speaks of a “d” sound sometimes heard before final “n” of a word, as in “chea(d)yn” = sea. I am informed that “b” is sometimes similarly heard before “m,” as in “Tho(b)m” = Tom. The same peculiarity used to be found in the singing of old sailors of English nationality.

* A.G. Gilchrist, “Introduction to Additional Texts and Fragments [Songs from the Isle of Man (Part ii)],” *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* vii.29 (1925), ix–xi.

¹ Besides having the use of the fragments preserved in this note-book, I have still more recently had the opportunity of going through a batch of very rough early copies, in pencil, of many of the tunes; some of which are accompanied by the first verse, refrain, or other scrap of the text, and in some cases by a title alternative to that given to the tune in the Clague mss. This has made it possible to eke out further the identifications derived from the note-book.—AGG.

Captain Whall calls it a “regulation pronunciation which has quite gone out.” He gives a verse of “The Female Smuggler” to illustrate it, which begins:

“O come list a-whid^{le} adnd you soodn shadll hear,”

[x] and in this instance of intruded sounds it should be noticed that they are not necessitated by any extra syllabic notes in the tune. W. Clark Russell gives similar examples of this sailor mannerism in singing.

The corrections made by Dr Clague on his own ms.—probably at a later period, when he had learnt more of the language—have been shown by enclosing them within *curved brackets*, while retaining the original spelling in case of any possible errors made by the doctor in his later elucidations and translations of his texts. Where translations or part translations were given, these have been revised and corrected by Archdeacon Kewley and Mr Cyril Paton, with a few further emendations by Mr A. Martin Freeman. Any suggested emendations by these editors of the text itself are enclosed within *square brackets* or found in footnotes or other annotations, so that other experts have the best practicable equivalent for a sight of the original ms.

The Doctor’s “English” spelling of words at that time unknown to him, together with the occurrence of certain dialect or corrupt forms, have made it difficult sometimes to find out what is really intended, but the Archdeacon and Mr Paton, who have gone carefully through the ms. and my own transcript of it, together, have in collaboration succeeded in elucidating most of the matter, though some words and lines remain obscure. Dr Clague has, one judges, in some instances been misled through lack of a knowledge of other versions which would have helped him to arrive at the sense.

These song-fragments, while lacking the value of full texts, have been quite sufficient in many cases to identify the songs as well as the tunes to which they belong, and—what is equally important—to solve the question whether the individual songs were sung in Manx-Gaelic or in English, as bilingual titles in the music ms. have proved in some instances to represent English words only. The net result of Archdeacon Kewley’s valuable discovery has been that only about ten, or less than one-eighth, of the song-tunes in Part i are now unpartnered with any words beyond their titles; and that Nos. 4, 13, 14, 37, 38, 41, 54 (First Version), 55, and 65 are the only remaining ballad—or song—tunes not suggestive of known texts, either Manx or English. This is a result which was undreamt of while Part i was in preparation; and though it is still a great pity that the fragments were not discovered in time to print them along with their proper tunes, in this case “better late than never” is eminently true. Besides the words belonging to tunes printed in the Journal, including the Last Gleanings in this part, verses belonging to many of the tunes in *Manx National Songs* and *Manx National Music* are to be found in the note-book, with a few other fragments to which the doctor may or may not have noted tunes which I have not succeeded in identifying.

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The jottings in the note-book show that there have existed Manx-Gaelic versions of “The Sheffield Apprentice,” “Shannon Side,” “Hame cam’ oor Gudeman,” “Pretty Nancy of Yarmouth,” “My Love she was born in the North Countree” (Joyce’s [xi] *Ancient Irish Music*, p.67), “The Outlandish Knight,” and “Willie o’ Winsbuiry” and that the English ballads “Young Edwin in the Lowlands Low,” “Lord Lovel,” “The Enniskillen Dragoon,” “The Victory” (see Ashton’s *Modern Street Ballads*, p.223), “The *Golden Vanity*” (as the *Tarbily*), “The Broken Token,” “The Winter it is past,” “Green Bushes “ and “Adieu, my lovely Nancy” were sung in English in the Island, with no doubt many others well-known to the collector.

It should be stated, before concluding, that Dr Clague’s ms. book contains a full and interesting version of “Ec ny Fiddleryn,” probably obtained from Tom Kermode. But as Tom Kermode’s version was noted by Prof. Strachan and Father Henebry in 1883, and published under the title of “A Manx Folk Song” in the *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, i Band, 1897, and as it does not differ materially from that obtained by Moore from the same singer, and printed in *Manx Ballads*, I have not included it here. The *Zeitschrift* copy, however, records the song in Prof. Strachan’s phonetic transcript of the words, and to this those interested in the phonetics of Manx-Gaelic may be referred.—AGG.

