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WHAT HAPPENED TO DR JOHN CLAGUE'S LIBRARY AND PERSONAL PAPERS?

C.I. PATON AND THE MISSES KEWLEY (1942) *

We know that the Rev. John Kewley acquired the library and personal papers of Dr John Clague (*d.* 1908) after the death of his widow, Margaret, in 1911. We know of the size of this cache of books and manuscripts and that they were considerable: “We had to take to our house, as far as I can judge, 6 or 7 tons of books & papers, & our house is only a small one. Consequently with books, papers & so many other things we scarcely have room to move among boxes, hampers, drawers & piles on the floors.”¹ We know (of course) that Kewley died in 1941,² and so his unmarried sisters with whom he was then living in the Rectory at Andreas would have to leave there and live elsewhere. So what happened to Clague’s library and moreover his papers?

C.I. Paton made regular summer visits to the Island, he was a keen naturalist and fluent speaker of Manx; he also had a long acquaintance with the Kewleys, one that had started as early as 1909, when he had become involved with the Rev. John Kewley on what to be Clague’s posthumously published *Cooinaghtyn Manninagh: Manx Reminiscences*.³

Paton was a keen diarist and he recorded the following in 1942: “After tea to the Kewley’s, looking through their books. They are too kind in wanting me to take any that I have not got & in wanting the Museum to have them.” (29 May 1942);⁴ “All my after tea time—about 5.15 to 8.30 looking over books etc. at the Kewley’s.” (5 June 1942); “Finished checking the Kewley’s books for the Museum & took away various books wh. they insisted on giving me—including some rare pieces.” (9 June 1942); “Museum—met Mr Megaw. Took the Kewley’s books there.” (11 June 1942).

What can we tease out from these brief entries in Paton’s diary? Firstly, there was not an outright dispersal of Kewley’s library on his death. It is difficult to see where the Misses Kewley were living when Paton was calling round for his tea, but

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¹ Letter from Rev. John Kewley to Sophia Morrison, 1 May 1911, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 3.

² J.D. Qualtrough, “Archdeacon John Kewley, 1860–1941,” *Journal of the Manx Museum* v.65 (1941). Corrected by Emma [as “Miss Kewley”] Kewley, “Errata i,” *Journal of the Manx Museum* v.65 (1942).

³ Dr John Clague, *Cooinaghtyn Manninagh: Manx Reminiscences By the Late Dr John Clague* (Castletown: M.J. Backwell, [1911]).

⁴ C.I. Paton personal diary (1905–49), in family hands.

Castletown seems to be the most likely. So then, the books at least had been moved from Andreas when necessity dictated that they remove from the Rectory upon their brother's death. Secondly, that Paton was the conduit between the sisters and the then Manx Museum Library over the gifting of some part of Clague's library to that institution.

It is sensible to assume that the books that went to the Library were Manx titles. This now calls for the now Manx National Heritage Library accession register to be examined in order to see just which titles were deposited by the Kewley sisters, or rather, the books chosen by Paton for the Library. As ever, it is possible that there are notes and annotations in Clague's hand in them, even the chance of a bookplate. Some may well be associational copies.

But what of the other books? Kewley's estimation in 1911 of the weight rather than the number of books and boxes of papers that had to be transported from "Crofton," the Doctor's residence in Castletown shows the simple fact of the sheer size of Clague's personal archive. To disperse the books in this collection through sale in 1941, when in the midst of war would have been impossible. What then did the Kewley sisters hold on to? Whatever has happened to this portion of Clague's collection? Was it ever offered for purchase at a later date?

The importance here is that Clague was one of the most foremost song collectors in the Island and one wonders how this interest was represented amongst his books. Any such titles would show an interest in the comparative aspect of folk song collecting. There is no indication that Kewley ever catalogued the library, there would of course be little or no reason for him to do so. He simply had to run his eye along the shelves to find a book, shelves, ones which were erected in the Rectory to specifically house the collection and further proof, should it be necessary, of its size.⁵

But what of the greater concern, namely Clague's own manuscripts? It is easy to see that there is no mention here whatsoever of any papers of Clague's that were still in the hands of the Misses Kewley. Nor, for that matter, any note of disappointment that there was nothing to be found or even disappointment that what was there was somehow run-of-the-mill. Yet Paton knew full well that Kewley had manuscript material as he had worked alongside him on A.G. Gilchrist's edition of a selection of tunes from the Clague Collection⁶ when Kewley had produced early working copies

⁵ "The joiner is so slow in erecting the shelves which I ordered that the books and papers are all mixed up, many of them in boxes or cases, and so I do not get a chance of sorting them, but I shall endeavour to get on with them as soon as I have a chance." Letter from Rev. John Kewley to Sophia Morrison, 17 November 1911, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 3.

⁶ A.G. Gilchrist, "Songs from the Isle of Man (Part i)," *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* vii.28 (1924), A.G. Gilchrist, "Songs from the Isle of Man (Part ii)," *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* vii.29 (1925), A.G. Gilchrist, "Songs from the Isle of Man (Part iii)," *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* vii.30 (1926).

of airs, or seemingly the field notes themselves. Paton had, in fact, even worked on some of the song texts produced by Kewley from amongst Clague's papers.⁷

Kewley had in 1935, deposited a number of Clague's manuscripts in the Manx Museum Library,⁸ namely what are now referred to as the "Clague Tune Books" (MNHL, MS 448/1-3 A and MS 449 B), and a series of twenty-four notebooks (MNHL, MS 450/1-24 A).⁹ Kewley was known to have the tune books, the notebooks are mentioned in the preface to *Cooïnaghtyn Manninagh: Manx Reminiscences*, but the material seen by Paton that was sent on to Gilchrist and later published by her remained in Kewley's possession.

It is a moot point as to what else Clague's personal papers contained and not just from a folk song or folklore point of view. Given the disorder that was found at "Crofton" it would seem that nothing had ever been thrown away in order for there to be such an accumulation that it could be measured literally in tons. Clague's own professional life as a doctor and consulting surgeon was amongst the "boxes, hampers, drawers & piles on the floors" at the Rectory in Andreas.¹⁰

It is difficult now to answer the question as to why so few of Clague's papers are now preserved amongst the collections of the Manx Museum Library, why Kewley did not donate more before he died, and moreover arrange for the remainder to be gifted on his death to that institution. Whatever the reason or reasons he did not, and so there is now a considerable gap in our understanding of not just his folk song and folklore collecting but also of the man himself.

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⁷ "Heard from Kewley sending verses from Dr Clague's collection." (27 May 1925); "Corrected the above." (28 May 1925); "I finished correcting above & sent them on to Miss Gilchrist." (29 May 1925).

⁸ William Cubbon, "Dr John Clague's Collection of Folk-tunes," *Journal of the Manx Museum* iii.44 (1935).

⁹ George Broderick, "Manx Traditional Songs and Song Fragments: ii, Manx Museum MS 450 A," *Béaloides* 50 (1982).

¹⁰ Letter from Rev. John Kewley to Sophia Morrison, 1 May 1911, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 3.

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