

# Manx Notes 215 (2015)

## “THE TOAST AND SONG WENT ROUND” JOHN FELTHAM IN THE ISLE OF MAN (1797–98) \*

John Feltham visited the Isle of Man in the 1790s and his book based on his travels, *A Tour through the Isle of Mann, in 1797 and 1798* was published in 1798.<sup>1</sup> Feltham put in the miles around the Island and managed to become lost while making his way from Glen Maye to Castletown. “To cross these mountains is but uncomfortable at best, and if fogs should come on, a stranger must lose his way inevitably.” (p.133) On this occasion he was put “in the direct road” by someone who could not speak English—his *Tour* was to contain such handy examples of Manx phrases as “I have lost my way,” “Which is the road to Ramsay?” and “I cannot talk Manks.” (68)

This was the time of the Post-Revestment period in the Island, the Running Trade having been suppressed by the British Crown in 1765. “From political ballads we may catch the sentiments that prevail,” wrote Feltham and he continued:

Sitting around the blazing hearth one evening with a number of Manksmen, and rocking the cradle of an infant beside me, the toast and song went round, in one of which I recollect the following lines, alluding to the transfer of the island. (136)

Besides the charming image of Feltham as a somewhat genial fellow rocking the baby, he goes on to record the lines of one of these political ballads:

“For the babes unborn will rue the day,  
That the Isle of Man was sold away;  
For there’s ne’er an old wife that loves a dram,  
But what will lament for the Isle of Man!” (136)

This is the first record we have to date of a singing session in the Island and of note one where topical compositions were being sung.

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### REFERENCES

Feltham, John. *A Tour through the Isle of Mann, in 1797 and 1798*. Bath: Printed by R. Crutwell, 1798.



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<sup>1</sup> John Feltham, *A Tour through the Isle of Mann, in 1797 and 1798* (Bath: Printed by R. Crutwell, 1798).