

Manx Notes 216 (2015)

“TRADITIONAL MANX MUSIC.
(HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED.)”

THE MANX GUILD CLASS 1908–14 *

Between 1908–14, the Manx Guild held a class for “Traditional Manx Music (Hitherto Unpublished),” though there was a break in 1913.¹ The intention was clear, to encourage the collecting of folk songs—in Manx it must be added. The Guild was competitive so someone had to win the class and clearly then some form of aesthetic criteria was to be applied. Some eight people were entrants in these years, with Sophia Morrison the only one who entered each and every time. The others were Harry Bridson (1909–12), P.W. Caine (1914), W.H. Gill (1909–11), J.J. Kneen (1910, 1912), W. Quane (1908), Stanley H. Taggart (1908), and Thomas Taggart (1910–12, 1914). One seeming feature of the class was that multiple entries were allowed and Bridson seemed to have been particularly competitive—or enthusiastic—entering twice in 1909 and 1910, and then three times in 1911 and 1912.

Harry Bridson had been the principal fieldworker for A.W. Moore’s *Manx Ballads and Music* (1896). He likely dipped into his own collection for the Guild rather than gathering anything new. W.H. Gill had been active at the same time as Bridson in the 1890s, collecting with his brother, Deemster J.F. Gill, and alongside Dr John Clague. He also returned to collecting in the Island around the time of the first class in 1908, the extent of which is unknown. Morrison represented that second wave of collecting in the Island after those from the 1890s, and she was a figure in the Celtic Revival and Pan Celticism movement who combined collecting with activism. Drawn into her circle were individuals such as P.W. Caine, who we know to have been a song collector outside of the evidence here, and J.J. Kneen, the stalwart teacher of Manx language classes, who passed on a small number of tunes to Morrison. Thomas Taggart was the Biblically-bearded organiser over many years of the musical life of Kerrowkeil Chapel and Grenaby who had both a sacred and profane repertoire, Marstrander collecting a song from the bawdy end of the latter. These people are known and well-known for that matter. But what of the other two names here? Namely, William Quane and, particularly, Stanley H. Taggart.

Taggart is easily identified in the 1901 Census as aged 25 and living at 11 Hildesley Road in Douglas, married to Jane S. Taggart, 24, and with two children, a daughter,

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¹ The material for this piece is drawn from the competition lists of the Manx Music Festival; for details, see the bibliography.

Frances E. Taggart (2) and William S. Taggart, their son of just two months.² All of the family were born in Douglas and Stanley and Jane are both returned as English speakers only (not surprising given their ages). His occupation is given as a Life Insurance Agent. This is an intriguing link with those helpers to Deemster Gill in the 1890s, one of whom, Benjamin Radcliffe, living in Ramsey was also an insurance agent. Another of the Deemster's circle, James McWhannell, had previously been a commission agent in the north of the Island. Whilst this may well be coincidence and Taggart might simply have been one of the enthusiasts at this date for the Manx language, it is possible that his rounds took him out into the countryside where he encountered singers; or, to lose the ruralist agenda, they were to be found in Douglas. To date, this is the only sighting of Stanley Taggart, he entered the Guild just the once, and if a member of Morrison's circle, there is nothing from him extant amongst her papers, nor is he mentioned by others. Nevertheless, his name needs to be noted.

William Quane in 1901, was 60 years old, a mariner, and living with his wife, Elizabeth, 49, in a shared house at 10 Church Street in Peel.³ Born in Patrick, he spoke both Manx and English; born in England, his wife spoke English only. The name of Thomas ('Tommy') Quane as a singer crops up amongst Morrison's papers, a fisherman from Patrick, the same parish as his namesake. It is possible, likely even, that they are brothers and William had entered a tune collected from him or was even a singer in his own right.

At stake was the sum of £1 for the winner and 10s. for the second placed entry. In 1912, this was reduced to 10s. and 7s 6d. Of interest here is the sponsors of the prize money: 1908, (1st) Manx Language Society, (2nd) William Cubbon; 1909, Prof. Boyd-Dawkins, Mrs Clague; 1910, "Mrs Latham Tomlin, Dane Court, Thanet," Mrs Clague; 1911, Mrs Latham Tomlin, Mrs Clague†; 1912, Mrs J. Fred Gill, Manx Language Society; 1914, Sophia Morrison, Manx Language Society.

Mrs Latham Tomlin of Dane Court, Thanet, is an unfamiliar name. She was Edith Quayle, daughter of Mark Hildesley Quayle of Crogga and Bridge House, Castletown, Clerk of the Rolls. She married Latham Tomlin in 1894, as his second wife, a relationship cut short by his death in 1900. Whilst living on at St Peter's on the Isle of Thanet, she evidently maintained her links with the Island and sponsored the class for 1910 and 1911. Boyd-Dawkins was a personal friend of Morrison and a summer visitor to the Island along with his wife and daughter. "Mrs Clague" was Margaret Clague, the widow of Dr John Clague and to pass away herself in 1911. Mrs J. Fred Gill was Lucinda Brooke Bell *née* Symes, Deemster J.F. Gill's second wife, who he married in Dublin in 1892. The year 1912 when she sponsored the class at the

² *Census Enumerators' Book* for Douglas, RG 13/5302, fol. 136, sch. 184.

³ *Census Enumerators' Book* for Peel, RG 13/5305, fol. 14, sch. 154.

Guild is an important one as this is when she bound together her late husband’s own folk song collection.

As seen the Guild class for “Traditional Manx Music (Hitherto Unpublished)” ran for just a few years but as a result we have two new names to contend with—Stanley Taggart and William Quane—and a reminder of Harry Bridson whose own collection used in part only by A.W. Moore has gone from view with no clear idea as to its overall size or contents. Then we have the widows of two of the Island’s most prominent song collectors—Margaret Clague and Lucinda Gill—sponsoring this class and both showing a continuing interest in the enthusiasms of their late husbands.

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