

# Manx Notes 217 (2015)

## “BILLY BOY” AND “MR BATEMAN” \*

Amongst the personal papers of Sophia Morrison are two small slips of paper, both of which record lines from “Kirree fo Niaghtey.”<sup>1</sup> (1) “Ta eayin ec y thannit as Jeas ec yn Oaish | Cha naal dow my Guillynbe shoiltain ain foast”; (2) “Ta ushtey ayns y chbbraghyn cha millish as feen | As ta ollan er y kirree cha liauyr as lheen.” [(1) ‘There are lambs at the *thannid* and two at the *oasht* | [?]My Boys will not fail me there’ll be a flock at us yet’; (2) ‘There’s water in the wells as sweet as wine | And there’s wool on the sheep so long and wide.’] Besides the lines themselves what of “Billy Boy” and “Mr Bateman”? These names appear on the slips and clearly refer to the source of the material. The 1901 census has a William Bateman, 73 years old, a retired lead miner living in Stanley Villa, at Minorca in Laxey, along with his wife, Margaret, aged 68, and their two daughters, Ann Jane (43) and Eliza (34).<sup>2</sup> Next door is a family of the same name, headed by John Bateman (39), clearly their son, a lead miner, with his wife, Christian (also 39), and their five children, William (12), Catherine (10), John (8), and Walter (1).<sup>3</sup> William and Margaret were both Manx speakers, his wife was from Lezayre, and all their children were born in Laxey, though none of whom spoke the language. Both the slips are in the same hand but it is not that of Sophia Morrison. It is unlikely that William Bateman is their author given that a nickname is recorded on one slip and a formal rather than a full name on the second. So we are dealing here not just with a name new to us but also with a helper to Sophia Morrison. This individual cannot be identified and whilst the handwriting is distinctive it does not match that of anything similar amongst her papers. So we are left with new lines from “Kirree fo Niaghtey,” their source identified, the name of a helper to be puzzled over, and, moreover, Morrison herself as collector and cataylst. And all this from just two small slips of paper....

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<sup>1</sup> MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Census Enumerators’ Book* for Lonan 1901, RG 13/5307, fol. 64, sch. 144.

<sup>3</sup> *Census Enumerators’ Book* for Lonan 1901, RG 13/5307, fol. 64, sch. 143.