

Manx Notes 223 (2015)

“CATCHY” MANX JIG TUNES AND LILTS *

In 1956, Thomas Quayle sent a letter in to the *Mona's Herald* from Veneta, Oregon in the USA where he wrote:

My great grandfather left the Isle of Man about a hundred years ago, and we've been American ever since, but as a boy I learned by ear a number of “catchy” Manx jig tunes and lilts, some of which I remember and play on my fiddle or accordion. These came from the Island, and were passed on to me.

I would very much like to know whether Manx folk are interested in “visiting” around among the elderly Manx and collecting old snatches of folk-songs or tunes which could easily be edited into a volume of the nation's music. Probably such work has already been done, and, if so, I would like to know where copies or books of such songs and dances can be obtained.

Why not publish a “request” column for such tunes to be collected? I believe many of your readers would be glad to contribute everything possible to build up a library of Manx native music.¹

One would of course like to know just what these tunes were—but they are clearly now lost to us at this date—and just how many others of the Manx diaspora learned and maintained a repertoire of Manx tunes. By the time Quayle was writing the Manx Museum Folk-Life Survey was in full swing—the main fieldworker being incidentally a Manx American from Oregon—but little in the way of vernacular song appears to have been collected. It remains to be seen if he was ever contacted and his repertoire recorded. In any case, with the erasure of the vernacular tradition from Island life it is figures such as Thomas Quayle who were likely the last tradition bearers of Manx music and song.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2015

REFERENCES

Quayle, Thomas C. “[Correspondence] Collection of Manx national tunes wanted.” *Mona's Herald* 14 February 1956: 2b.



* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “‘Catchy’ Manx Jig Tunes and Lilts,” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* September (2015): [11]. Reproduced here with sources.

¹ Thomas C. Quayle, “[Correspondence] Collection of Manx national tunes wanted,” *Mona's Herald* 14 February 1956.