

Manx Notes 230 (2015)

“GIVE THE QUALTAGH TEA!” *

“When the old Manx custom of welcoming the dark-haired ‘qualtagh,’ or ‘first foot,’ is observed on New Year’s Day, he should be given a ‘nice cup of tea’ instead of the usual glass of wine or spirits. This was the advice given to people who attended the Ramsey P[leasant] S[aturday] E[vening] meeting on Saturday last. The speaker was the Rev. J.K. Elliot, Methodist minister, who stated he had never accepted alcoholic liquor in the Christmas and New Year festivities.”

So reported the *Isle of Man Examiner* on 18 November 1938.¹ Viewed now at this distance this now seems comical, as perhaps did the *Examiner* at the time, hence the title given to the piece. Nevertheless, it does show how vernacular culture comes under pressure to be reformed in its practices—instead of permitted excess, in the sense of a few drinks more than one would normally take, a demand for restraint and a muting thereby of celebration.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2015

REFERENCES

Anon. “[Ramsey] Give the Qualtagh Tea!” *Isle of Man Examiner* 18 November 1938: 15c.



* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “Give the Qualtagh Tea!” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* December (2015): [12]. Reproduced here with sources.

¹ Anon, “[Ramsey] Give the Qualtagh Tea!” *Isle of Man Examiner* 18 November 1938.