

# Manx Notes 281 (2017)

## THE REVIVAL OF THE MANX LANGUAGE (12) THE FORMATION OF THE MANX LANGUAGE SOCIETY (1899)

### THE FORMATION OF THE MANX LANGUAGE SOCIETY (1899)

#### ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER, 18 MARCH 1899

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2. "A meeting of ...." *Isle of Man Examiner* 18 March 1899: 6b.

#### ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER, 25 MARCH 1899

3. "Formation of a National Society." *Isle of Man Examiner* 25 March 1899: 2b.
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5. "The Revival of the Manx Language." *Isle of Man Examiner* 25 March 1899: 8d–e.
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#### ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (18 MARCH 1899)

1. "THOSE WHO ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED ...," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (18 MARCH 1899)

Those who are deeply concerned in the preservation of the Manx language will be glad to learn that, immediately after the Guild competitions on Wednesday afternoon next, there will be a conference of Manx persons who are wishful to help forward the revival of the old tongue.

"Those who are ...." *Isle of Man Examiner* 18 March 1899: 4e.

2. "A MEETING OF MANX PEOPLE ...," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (18 MARCH 1899)

A meeting of Manx people who are interested in the preservation of the old tongue is to be held at Mrs Kelly's, Empire House (opposite Castle Mona), on Wednesday next, at 5 o'clock. Mr E.E. Fourier, the secretary of the forthcoming Pan-Celtic Congress, is expected to be present. The meeting will discuss (1) whether it is wise to endeavour to preserve the Manx Language, and (2) if so, the methods which should be adopted to secure that end. The meeting is called by Mrs Laughton, the hon. secretary of the Guild Music Competitions, which are doing so much to revive the Manx Language. It is expected that Mr A. W. Moore will preside. We hope that this meeting will carefully consider the matter from the patriotic standpoint, and whatever course may be decided upon, that Manx people will give it their hearty support.

"A meeting of ...." *Isle of Man Examiner* 18 March 1899: 6b.

ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (25 MARCH 1899)

3. “FORMATION OF A NATIONAL SOCIETY,” ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (25 MARCH 1899)

We are much pleased that at the drawing-room meeting held on Wednesday, under the auspices of the Fine Arts Guild, it was decided to form a Society for the Preservation of the Manx Language. The meeting was attended by ladies and gentlemen of position throughout the Island, and the proceedings were unanimous and enthusiastic. The Speaker of the House of Keys was made president; Deemster Gill, Dr Clague, Mr J.C. Crellin, H.K., and Rev E.B. Savage, M.A., vice-presidents; Mr W. Quayle, secretary; and Mrs Laughton, treasurer. The committee is a representative and able one, and includes some of the best Manx scholars and those who take a deep interest in the movement.

The new society has been launched under very happy conditions, and the outlook is a hopeful one. We hope that patriotic Manx people all over the world will give to the society all the support possible, morally and financially. There is a great deal of work before the society, and offers of help in the way of prizes for musical and literary competitions in Manx would be welcomed.

“Formation of a National Society.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 25 March 1899: 2b.

4. “THE MOST NOTEWORTHY ....” ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (25 MARCH 1899)

[4d] The most noteworthy event of the week is undoubtedly the formation of a Society for the Preservation of Manks as a living language. The deep interest which has been taken in the language within recent years has culminated in the formation of this society, which has been started, we are [4e] pleased to state, under happy auspices and with good hopes of ultimate success. The ladies and gentlemen who are responsible for the formation of the society well know that there is a big struggle before them; but they are well acquainted with the present situation, they are competent and practical persons, and they are fully alive to the fact that if they can secure the sympathy and support of their countrymen and women, they will ultimately succeed in not only preserving the language, but in making it an active, living power.

“The most noteworthy ....” *Isle of Man Examiner* 25 March 1899: 4d–e.

5. "THE REVIVAL OF THE MANX LANGUAGE," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (25 MARCH 1899)

THE REVIVAL OF THE MANX LANGUAGE  
FORMATION OF A PRESERVATION SOCIETY  
ENTHUSIASTIC DRAWING ROOM MEETING

On Wednesday afternoon, in the drawing-room of The Empire House, Queen's Promenade, about fifty ladies and gentlemen met, by the invitation of the Fine Arts and Industrial Guild, In order to consider (1) Whether it is wise to endeavour to preserve the Manx Language, and (2) If so, the methods which should be adopted to secure that end.

Mr A.W. Moore, the Speaker of the House of Keys, presided, and among those who were present were Mr E.E. Fournier (the secretary of the forthcoming Pan or All-Celtic Congress, to be held in Dublin in 1900), Dr. Clague, Castletown; Mr J.C. Crellin. H.K., Mr W. Quine, H.K., Rev. Canon Savage. M.A., Mr W. Quayle, Ballamillgyn; Rev. C.H. Leece, Vicar of Rushen: Rev. John Kewley, M.A., Vicar of Arbory; Mr W.J. Cain. Douglas; Mrs Laughton, Miss Morrison, Miss Graves, Miss Joughin, Peel; Mr E. Corteen, Mr J.E. Leece. Douglas; Mr S.K. Broadbent, Mr Henry Kelly. Ballaqueeney; Mr William Cashen, Mr Thomas Kelly, Peel; Mr F.R. Clucas, advocate; Mr John Costain. Colby; Mr Thomas Moore, Surby; Mr W. Moore, Peel; Mr James H. Moore. Lonan: Mr H. Cannon, Miss Goodwin, Peel; Mr James Kewley, Agneash; Mr Richard Qualtrough, Ballafesson; Mrs Kelly, Ballaqueeney; Mr and Miss Kneen. Croit-e-Caley; Mr M. Christian, Castletown; Mr W. Kneen, Douglas; Rev. John Quine, M.A., Vicar of Lonan; Mrs Dr Woods, Douglas; Mrs J.J. Davidson, Miss F. Kerruish, Douglas; Miss Creer, Miss Amy Clague, Esplanade; Mrs Roberts, Castletown; Miss Corrin, Castletown; Miss M.L. Wood, Douglas: Mr T. Moore, Bradda; Mr Wm. Cubbon; Mr James Clague, Castletown; Mr Thomas Kneen, Ballacorkish; Mr Callow, Laxey; Mr Killip, Clyeen, Michael; and many other ladies and gentlemen of influence.

The Rev J. Kewley presided until the Speaker of the House of Keys arrived, there being a meeting of the Legislature that afternoon. He asked Mr W. Cubbon to read a number of letters which had been received.

Mr Cubbon read a large number of letters from the following gentlemen, amongst others: The Deemster Gill; Professor Rhys, of Oxford University; Dr Douglas Hyde. President of the Gaelic League: Mr J. MacNelil, B.A., Editor of the Gaelic Journal; Rev E.B. Savage, M.A.; Mr MacSweeney, Secretary of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language; from several local gentlemen who take an interest in philological and antiquarian research, and quite a number from Manx people abroad. All these letters were, generally speaking, full of sympathy with the movement for the preservation and revival of the Manx language.

Mr William Quayle, of Ballamillgyn, Lonan, moved the first resolution. He said: Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I am sure it must awaken a feeling of

profound regret in the breast of every true Manxman to reflect upon the apathy and indifference manifested by his fellow-countrymen in regard to the preservation of the ancient speech of his native isle. Owing to the lack of patriotism displayed by the Manx people, and the predominance of English influences in the Island, consequent upon our increased intercourse with the inhabitants of the mainland, the decline of the Manx as a spoken tongue has, during the present century, been very marked; but, of late years, its decay has been proceeding by veritable “leaps and bounds,” until the language has now arrived at the verge of extinction. Our national tongue is no longer heard in our public institutions—our courts of justice, our churches, or our schools. The only national function in connection with which it is now used is the promulgation of the laws on Tynwald Hill, and, judging from the tendency of events within recent years, I am afraid that, even in connection with this interesting ceremony, it will be abolished before long. It is regrettable to find that, among the peasantry also, the language seems to have lost its bold, and is seldom used as a medium of conversation, except by elderly people. But some people may ask—Why should we lament the decay of the language? Why should we seek to preserve it when it is no longer of practical utility, and therefore not worth preserving? Why should we desire its revival when we have in English a language of greater resource and power, and a language of infinitely greater utility for the practical purposes of life? Well, let me endeavour to offer one or two considerations in answer to these objections, which are very natural ones, and in doing so I am disposed first of all to question whether, as a language, the capabilities of the English are so much superior to those of the Celtic, as the opponents of the latter would have us to believe; indeed, I am convinced that they are not. In the next place, I should like to ask whether Utility is the only criterion of the value of a thing; whether there is no other—no higher criterion than this. Do we apply this test, and this only to all other things — to poetry and fiction, for example; to Greek and Latin, and to a multitude of other subjects that might be mentioned? Now I think you will grant at once that such is not the case, and that, moreover, it would be a most unfortunate thing for society if it were so. But I submit that the study of Manx, even if judged upon the low ground of Utility, deserves attention, and even possesses claims to consideration equal to those of any of the subjects I have named. The same reasons that justify the study of those subjects may be urged with equal force in favour of the study of Manx. To the student, the Manx language is full of interest because of its antiquity and historical association; and it is equally interesting on account of its peculiar grammatical forms and usages; while to Manxmen it ought to be doubly interesting, inasmuch as it was the language spoken by their ancestors; the language in which, as the Rev. T.E. Brown eloquently says, “they had prayed and preached; the language in which they had bought and sold; the language in which they had rejoiced and mourned.”

## WHAT IS BEING DONE

I am delighted to find that within the past few months considerable efforts have been made in many districts throughout the Island with a view to the revival of the language, and that several classes have been formed. Amongst others, I may mention the following: Douglas, with 25 students; Lonan, 25 students; Peel, 75 students; and Andreas, 20 students. Classes are also about to be formed in Foxdale and Rushen, and other places. I am told that several gentlemen in these localities have been patriotic enough to offer their services gratuitously as teachers. I also understand, from enquiries, that in many districts there are students engaged in the private study of the language, but the great obstacle to their progress in acquiring a knowledge of it is the want of suitable text books.

## FROM A PATRIOTIC STANDPOINT

Now, to my mind, one of the strongest reasons why Manxmen should revere and cherish the language of their forefathers is because it is one of the few surviving evidences of the separate and distinct nationality of the Manx people, and because, moreover, it constitutes a living bond of union between the Celts of Mona and the Celtic populations of the adjacent countries. When a nation loses its language, it loses its most precious heritage: it loses its patriotism; it loses its nationality, and becomes, as it were, a nation dwelling in a strange land. In a word, the extinction of a nation's language is a sure and certain sign of its national decay. The other Celtic nations have long since realised this fact. They have recognised the necessity of taking action, and are making a bold and successful effort to rescue their ancient tongue from the fate with which it is threatened. Shall we, as patriotic Manxmen, follow their example? or shall we continue an attitude of indifference in the matter? Shall we allow our noble inheritance to pass away from us without making some effort to retain it? I trust not. Let me in conclusion, paraphrase the immortal lines of Scott, and ask:

Breathes there a Manxman with soul so dead,

Who never to himself hath said:

This is my own, my native tongue!

I now beg to propose the following resolution: "That this meeting is of opinion that some practical steps should be taken with a view to the preservation of the Manks language."

Mr William Kneen, Croit-e-Caley, Rushen seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Canon Savage gave an interesting speech. He described some of the reasons why the language had decayed, and urged that, they as patriotic Manxmen and women, should at once try not only to prevent its extinction—but to make it an active living language. If they allowed it to die out they would be giving away a rich heritage, which had been handed to them by their fore-fathers, and which they should do

their utmost to preserve. In conclusion, he moved “That a society be formed for the preservation of the Manks as a living language.”

The motion was seconded by Mr Quine H.K., Mr J.C. Crellin H.K., Dr Clague, Mr W. Cashen, Peel, Mr James Kelly, Peel, Mr Killip, Michael, and Mr James Kewley, Lonan, supported the motion in brief speeches, and it was adopted enthusiastically.

THE OFFICIALS OF THE SOCIETY

The election of the officers was then proceeded with Mr A.W. Moore Speaker of the House of Keys, was elected president; Deemster Gill, Dr Clague, Mr J.C. Crellin, H.K., and Rev Canon Savage, were appointed vice-presidents; Mr W. Quayle was, on the motion of Mr A.W. Moore, appointed to the position of secretary; and Mrs Laughton was elected Treasurer. The committee were appointed as follows: Rev John Kewley, M.A., Arbory; Rev C. H. Leece, Rushen; Miss Morrison, Peel; Miss Graves, Peel; Mr W.J. Cain, Douglas; Mr W. Radcliffe Andreas; Mr Goodwin, Peel; Mr E. Corteen, Douglas; Mr W.J.C. Joughin, Peel; Mr J.E. Leece, Douglas; The Ven. the Archdeacon; Mr Wm. Cubbon, Douglas; Mr Henry Kelly, Ballaqueeney; Mr Wm. Kneen, Croit-e-Caley; Mr Wm. Kneen, Douglas; and Mr John Cubbon, Castletown (with power to add to their number).

The executive and other sub committees are to be elected by the above, the officials being ex officio members of the committee.

Mr Moore then took the chair, and thanked the society for the great honour done him in electing him their president. He had taken considerable interest in the subject, and hoped the society’s efforts would be successful. He welcomed Mr Fournier as a brother Celt who was taking a deep interest in the work of binding together the Celtic peoples all over the world. (Applause)

“The Revival of the Manx Language.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 25 March 1899: 8d–e.

6. E.E. FOURNIER, “SHALL WE SAVE THE LANGUAGE?” ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (25 MARCH 1899)

SHALL WE SAVE THE LANGUAGE?

SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD

ELOQUENT ADDRESS BY MR FOURNIER

Mr E.E. Fournier, who spoke with difficulty owing to having a cold, contracted while crossing the channel, had a warm reception. He said: Mr President, ladies and Gentlemen,—The foundation of the Manx Language Society, which you have just successfully accomplished, will be greeted with much enthusiasm by the three or four million Celtic speakers in Ireland, Wales, Brittany, and the Highlands of Scotland. You are probably aware that the Manx language, as at present spoken among you, is

understood without much difficulty by Irish and Scottish Gaels. The Welsh and Bretons, who form what is called the Brythonic branch of the Celtic race, speak a language which is closely related to yours from a grammatical point of view, but which is no longer understood by Gaelic speakers. Nevertheless, I am sure that the revival of the Manx language will put new courage into those who have laboured with such marked success to keep alive the language of Merlin and Arthur.

THERE ARE FOUR CHIEF REASONS

which have convinced the leading workers in the Celtic language movement of the necessity of keeping alive their ancestral tongue. In the first place, the advantages of bilingual speech are becoming clearer every day. It is found that, those who from early youth have been accustomed to express themselves in two different languages acquire a mental vigour and alertness which not only improves their intellectual faculties all round, but enables them to acquire an additional language with facility. From a

PRACTICAL AND COMMERCIAL POINT OF VIEW

the maintenance of the Celtic languages thus becomes a desideratum of the national economy. The five Celtic nations are most fortunately so placed that the acquisition of the two languages spoken among them is a matter of very little difficulty. You must remember that in England, for instance, the thorough acquisition of a second language, say French or German, necessitates a residence abroad. Perhaps the English people, recognising the advantages of a bi-lingual education, and seeing the Celts outstripping them in foreign intercourse, will before very long voluntarily take to the acquisition of one of the Celtic languages of the United Kingdom, so as to recover lost ground (applause). The second main reason why the Manx language should be preserved is because it

EMBODIES THE VERY ESSENCE

of a large part of Manx history. If the language should be lost, the Manx people will be cut off from their past. The Celtic placenames of the Island will no longer speak to them in their own old tongue, (hear, hear)—Manx folklore and native music must inevitably lose its characteristics as a Celtic nation, its "Celtic inheritance," which gives it an honoured place among the Celtic nationalities (applause). It is this position in the Celtic world which has also made Celtic patriots anxious to preserve that most important part of our inheritance—our language. For the Celtic race, probably the oldest in Europe, is the heir of some of the most glorious traditions which have inspired the poet and nerved the arm of the warrior. The Ossianic and Arthurian sagas alone would secure for us everlasting fame, and who knows what a bright future may yet be in store for a united Celtic race? The preservation of the Manx language will give you a key to the great treasury of poetry and song contained in the Irish and Scottish Gaelic manuscripts and published records (hear, hear). Had I to learn Gaelic over again, I am not sure that I should not prefer to acquire it

through the Manx with its phonetic spelling so convenient to English readers. I need hardly dwell on the fourth great point in the plea for the Celtic language,

ITS NATIONAL ASPECT

(hear, hear). In Ireland, that is a most powerful factor in favour of the Irish language. The people are realising that they have a traditional language which is their very own. They are awaking to the fact that if there is to be an Irish literature which is not a mere appendage to English literature, it must be written in Irish, and must be filled and permeated with that spirit of the Irish race which can never be adequately embodied in a Teutonic language like the English (applause).

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE NEW SOCIETY

And now let me add a few words suggested more particularly by the present occasion. The society which has just been formed has heavy work before it. I shall not minimise the arduous character of its task, but on the other hand, I can truthfully say that I see no cause whatever why its objects should not be completely realised. The society will have, in the first place, I suppose, to collect whatever yet remains of poetry, folklore, and music associated with the Manx language. It should then set about the collection and comparison of dialects, and, so to speak, codify the modern Manx language. This work requires a good deal of philological skill; but I have no doubt that your president, your hon. secretary, and the able members who form the committee will be fully equal to it. The existing grammars, dictionaries, and primers, will have to be revised and supplemented, and when that is done, there will be at your disposal a language which, I think, you will find full y capable of answering every need of civilised life (hear, hear). The formation of a Manx library to which the public could have access, would open up the treasures of Manx literature to every Manxman. A most important part of your work will be to teach every Manx speaker, if possible, to read Manx, which, in view of the phonetic spelling, should not be at all difficult. Then the parents should be urged to speak Manx to their children, for

THE FUTURE OF THE LANGUAGE LIES WITH THE YOUNGER GENERATION

(applause). Later on you will probably have it taught in the schools. You will thus have a body of Manx speakers to whom those who wish to acquire the spoken language can go for information. It will then be possible for every inhabitant of this Island to learn to speak it with ease, and I have no doubt that such facilities will be largely availed of. And so you will be able to create a Manx literature. A beginning has already been made in the Isle of Man Examiner, and I have no doubt that it will be continued with renewed earnestness. A valuable means of encouraging the writing of Manx is a Manx literary competition on the model of those organised by the Welsh Bardic Gorsedd and the Irish "Oireachtas," and this, I think, could well be done in connection with your Guild Competitions (applause). There may be some initial difficulty about the printing of Manx books, owing to the numerical smallness of the Manx population. But with the aid of the American Manx, and your brother

Gaels across the sea, I am sure that last difficulty will disappear also. And so we may look forward to a time when the great majority of the people in this happy Island will speak the

SWEET-SOUNDING LANGUAGE OF THEIR CELTIC ANCESTORS,  
and a fresh and vigorous native literature will have supplanted the literary pabulum supplied by the less refined portion of the London press. People will visit the Island not only in search of health, recreation, and natural scenery, but will come from far distant lands on a pilgrimage, to see this proud little nation of yours which has so sturdily maintained its privileges and traditions for untold centuries (loud applause).

Mr Fournier's address elicited hearty applause, and a vote of thanks was accorded to him for it, and for his kindly and sympathetic interest in the movement for the preservation of the Manx language.

A meeting of the committee will be held at an early date and, in the meantime, those who wish to join the Society should write either to Mr Wm. Quayle or Mrs Laughton.

We learn from reliable sources that there are at present quite 250 learners and students of the language—a sufficient proof of the strength of the Revival.

“Shall we save the Language?”. *Isle of Man Examiner* 25 March 1899: 8e.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2017

