

Manx Notes 303 (2017)

“THE CONCERT PROGRAMME WAS WELL RENDERED” THE SONS OF MONA SOCIETY * (1904)

On the 30 November 1904, the Sons of Mona Society of Chicago held their 31st Annual Reunion in that city.¹ The programme for the evening “was much the same as those of past years.” So, as reported, “[w]e had a short concert, followed by a grand march and dance.” Not surprisingly, patriotism was to the fore and this is shown in the titles of the songs that were performed, namely “Lovely Mona,” which “struck a responsive chord in the hearts of all present,” and “we never think any of our meetings could be properly conducted without the singing of ‘Ramsey Town’—you could have heard the audience sing the chorus; it nearly shook the roof off the hall.”

This was then followed by a number of dances, waltzes, quadrilles and two-steps, each with a name that recalled the Island: Sons of Mona, Ellan Vannin, Ben-my-Chree, Snaefell, Douglas, Peel Castle, Castletown, Laxey, Ramsey, Port St Mary, Foxdale, Port Erin, Arbory, and Glen Maye. The evening was then concluded with “Ta Trae Ghoill Thie” (followed by “Home, Sweet Home”). The first two songs, “Lovely Mona” and “Ramsey Town,” were again sung in 1912,² and no doubt in the years in-between.

Turning to other Manx Societies, and in different years, at the 20th Annual Festival of the Mona Relief Society in Cleveland in 1873, “Lovely Mona” had been sung by a choir consisting of Mrs Shimmin, Mrs Quiggin, Miss Christian, and Messrs Hammer and T.C. Quayle.³ The Transvaal Manx Association in 1912 celebrated Hollantide in the Freemasons’ Hall in Jeppetown,⁴ and “a quintette, ‘Sweet Ben-my-Chree,’ which had been specially written and composed for the occasion by Messrs A.O. Cain and Jos. Cain, brought back the plainive Dorian music of our Island home.” There is a line of research here that needs to be followed up, the musical programmes of Manx Societies abroad, their use of songs such as “Lovely Mona,” the compositional efforts of individuals such as the Cains, in short the use of music to recreate on other shores Manxness, as the toast in 1873 put it, “Dear Ellan Vannin, with her Green Hills by the Sea.”

* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “‘The concert programme was well rendered.’ The Sons of Mona Society (1904),” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* November (2017): [16].

1 “Chicago Manx People Foregather: Successful Reunion,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 31 December 1904.

2 “Chicago Manx Celebration: Interesting Function,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 28 December 1912.

3 “Mona Relief Society: Meeting of Manxmen in America,” *Manx Sun* 18 January 1873.

4 “Hollantide in the Transvaal: Another Worthy Song of Ellan Vannin Honoured,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 28 December 1912.

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REFERENCES

- Anon. "Mona Relief Society: Meeting of Manxmen in America." *Manx Sun* 18 January 1873: 5c.
- . "Chicago Manx People Foregather: Successful Reunion." *Isle of Man Examiner* 31 December 1904: 8a.
- . "Chicago Manx Celebration: Interesting Function." *Isle of Man Examiner* 28 December 1912: 2b.
- . "Hollantide in the Transvaal: Another Worthy Song of Ellan Vannin Honoured." *Isle of Man Examiner* 28 December 1912: 2a–b.

