

Manx Notes 410 (2019)

“MISS MORRISON AT THE WHEEL” (16) THE NEWSPAPER OBITUARIES (1917)

Sophia Morrison died on Sunday, 14 January 1917, and gathered together here are the obituaries that appeared in the Island’s newspapers.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2019

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MONA’S HERALD

1. “[Births, Marriages, Deaths] Deaths.” *Mona’s Herald* 17 January 1917: 1a.
2. “[Obituaries] Miss S. Morrison.” *Mona’s Herald* 17 January 1917: 5f.

RAMSEY COURIER

3. “Death of Miss Sophia Morrison.” *Ramsey Courier* 19 January 1917: [2]b.

ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER

4. “[Births, Marriages, & Deaths] Deaths.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 20 January 1917: 1a.
5. “Death of Notable Manxwoman: The Late Miss S. Morrison’s Interesting Career.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 20 January 1917: 8d.

PEEL CITY GUARDIAN

6. “Death of Miss Morrison.” *Peel City Guardian* 20 January 1917: [5]a.

ISLE OF MAN WEEKLY TIMES

7. “[Births, Marriages, & Deaths] Deaths.” *Isle of Man Weekly Times* 20 January 1917: 5f.
8. “Death of Miss Sophia Morrison.” *Isle of Man Weekly Times* 20 January 1917: 9a.
9. P.W. Caine [initialled as “P.W.C.”]. “Death of Miss Sophia Morrison: An Appreciation.” *Isle of Man Weekly Times* 20 January 1917: 9a–b.

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MONA'S HERALD

(1)

MORRISON.—On 14th Jan., at Athol-street, Peel, Sophia, daughter of the late Charles and Louise Morrison.—Funeral to-day (Wednesday), at 11-30 a.m.—(No flowers, by request).

“[Births, Marriages, Deaths] Deaths.” *Mona's Herald* 17 January 1917: 1a.

(2)

The death occurred on Sunday of Miss Sophia Morrison, a lady well known in Manx circles. Miss Morrison was hon. secretary, and took a deep interest in the preservation of the Manx language and Manx folklore. She undertook much arduous work in connection with the publication of the various books published by the Society, and in addition acted as editor of “Mannin,” the magazine of the Manx Society. The success of the Peel Players in several Manx plays was due to no small extent to the efforts of the late Miss Morrison.

“[Obituaries] Miss S. Morrison.” *Mona's Herald* 17 January 1917: 5f.

RAMSEY COURIER

(3)

We regret to announce the death of a well known Manx lady, Miss Sophia Morrison, which took place at her home, Athol Street, Peel, on Sunday. She was perhaps, best known as hon. secretary of the Manx Society, in which she took a whole-hearted interest. The deceased lady never missed an opportunity of fostering the Manx language and Manx customs, and travelled into every nook and corner of the Island in search of Manx folk lore. She also undertook the arduous work in connection with the publication from time to time of the various books published by the Society, and acted as editor of the Society's magazine “Mannin.” Amongst her last acts, only a few days ago, was the posting to the many subscribers of the newly-published number of “Mannin.” The success of the “Peel Players” in several Manx plays, was also due to the untiring efforts of Miss Morrison.

ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER

(4)

MORRISON.—Sunday. 14th January, at Athol-street, Peel. Sophia, daughter of the late Charles and Louisa Morrison.—Interred in Peel Cemetery on Wednesday.

(5)

In the death of Miss Sophia Morrison, of Peel, which took place on Sunday, the Isle of Man sustains loss well nigh irreparable. Miss Morrison had been in ill-health for several weeks, but the news of her passing came as a surprise, it not being known generally that her condition was at all dangerous. The deceased lady was born in Peel, and was one of the most Manx of the natives of the most Manx of Manx towns. Her father, the late Mr Charles Morrison, was the owner of many fishing boats, and carried on an extensive business as a provision merchant. From childhood upwards, she was brought into constant contact with Manx people of the old School, and she early developed a passionate love of Manx folklore, Manx tradition, and Manx customs. Her main interest through life was the conservation of the Manx language, and indeed of all things good in connection with the history and the family and communal life of the Island. With this object in view, she gave unsparingly of her ability, her time, and her money, and she had her reward—her only reward—in the knowledge that her efforts were in high degree successful. Retiring of disposition almost to a fault, she worked quietly, and in fact went out of her way to avoid the credit which she richly deserved. She was one of the original members of the Manx Society (which was for some time known as the Manx Language Society), and she remained faithful to the society to her death. It was in large measure due to her initiative that many publications designed to assist persons desirous of learning Manx were brought out, including Mr Edmund Goodwin's *Manx Grammar*. She was herself an accomplished Manx scholar, and took a great interest in the comparative philology of the Celtic languages. In this connection she was in frequent correspondence with many eminent Celtic scholars, among those the late Professor Rhys, Professor Quiggin, and Mr E. Fournier. She, too, encouraged Mr J.J. Kneen, who has probably a more profound knowledge of Manx than any other living person, to engage in literary and teaching work of high educational value. In truth, she left no stone unturned to keep alive the tongue of her forefathers and to encourage its wider use. As has been stated, she was passionately devoted to Manx folklore, and was without doubt the ablest authority on this very interesting subject. Some years ago she wrote a work on Manx folklore, which was published in London at 3s 6d and which still circulates. The book displays painstaking effort and intelligent appreciation of a delightful theme: and so far as the Isle of Man is concerned, it is bound to remain as a standard work. Another interesting book by Miss Morrison was an anthology of Manx Proverbs, which attained considerable popularity. "The Manx Cookery Book," compiled by her from recipes preserved in Manx families either traditionally or in writing, had very considerable success, and the only edition printed was quickly sold out. Of the Manx Society she was certainly the leading spirit. For several years she filled the post of honorary secretary, and in the discharge of the duties of her office she displayed whole-hearted devotion. She was mainly instrumental in bringing about the issue by the society of "Mannin," a periodical

fascinating and interesting both from the literary and artistic points of view. From the first number to the last she was editress, and displayed rare discretion and capacity in her selection of matter. Eight numbers have been published, and sufficient matter has been left by Miss Morrison for another number. Of her latter years "Mannin" was the hobby. With her financial considerations were of no moment—all she was concerned with was that the periodical should be worthy of the Isle of Man. To ensure this, she became responsible for the cost of production, and the responsibility made considerable drafts upon her means—drafts which she cheerfully met. Whatever the fate of "Mannin" may be, there can be no doubt that the numbers already issued will rank with "The Manx Note Book"—the late Mr Arthur Moores periodical—as affording a beautiful and convincing insight into things Manx. It is largely due to Miss Morrison's encouragement and application that something in the nature of a Manx drama has been created, for she stood by Mr Christopher R. Shimmin in the production and publication of his admirable Manx plays, and gave prominence in the last published number of "Mannin" to a comedy, "Ellie's Stranger," from the pen of Mr W. Clucas Kinley. This last-named play should, by the way, find a hearty reception in the Island in the event of production, for it is cleverly constructed, it accurately and humorously portrays many interesting phases of Manx character, it has the Manx atmosphere undiluted, and it is of uncommon literary merit. Some years ago Miss Morrison travelled in the United States. In the course of her journeyings she met many descendants of Manx emigrants, and found that these were even more interested in the Isle of Man than she had anticipated. A member of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society, Miss Morrison filled the office of President for a year with much acceptance. Miss Morrison's father and mother predeceased her many years ago. She leaves surviving four brothers and three sisters. The brothers are Dr Fred Morrison, who resides in England; and Messrs Charles Morrison, Thomas Morrison, and Stanley Morrison, of Peel. Her sisters are the Misses Mary, Matilda, and Louisa Morrison, of Peel. Another sister, the late Mrs W. Teare, of Peel, predeceased her.

THE FUNERAL

The funeral of the late Miss Sophia Morrison took place on Wednesday morning, when the large and representative attendance of Peel people demonstrated the great respect in which the deceased lady was held by her fellow townfolk. A feature of the gathering was the presence of a deputation from the Manx Society, consisting of Mr H.P. Kelly (ex-president), Mr W. Cubbon (hon. treas.), Mr W.A. Craine, Mr T. Dodd, Mr James N. Oates, and Mr P.W. Caine. Many other members of the society attended in their private capacity. From Miss Morrison's residence in Athol-street to the hearse, the coffin was borne by Messrs J. Joughin, C.R. Shimmin, C. Cashin, and C.H. Cowley, who had been intimately associated with her in her national work. The mourners consisted of members of her family. Interment was at Peel Cemetery,

and the coffin was borne from the hearse to the mortuary chapel and from the chapel to the grave by the Peel Players—Messrs Joughin, Shimmin, Cashin, and Cowley. In the chapel and at the graveside, the service for the burial of the dead was conducted by the Rev. N.V. Scorer, Vicar of German. At the graveside the hymn “Thy Will be done” was sung by those present. Though the funeral arrangements were simple of character, the ceremony throughout was a most impressive one. Although flowers were not desired, a beautiful wreath was sent by the Peel Players, with the inscription “A last tribute”; and a large cross by members of the family. The mourners included her sisters, Miss Mary and Miss Louisa Morrison; her brothers, Messrs Thomas, G.S., Fred, (of Manchester), and Charles Morrison, J.P., of Peel; and her nephew, Mr E. Teare.

“Death of Notable Manxwoman: The Late Miss S. Morrison’s Interesting Career.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 20 January 1917: 8d.

PEEL CITY GUARDIAN

(6)

It is with sincere regret that we record the death of Miss Sophia Morrison, of Peel, who died on Sunday at her residence, Athol street. Miss Morrison had not been in the best of health for a little time, but it was but recently that serious symptoms developed. Miss Morrison filled a unique position in the life of the Isle of Man. In 1901 she was appointed Secretary of Yn Cheshaght Gailckagh (The Manx Society), a position she filled at the time of her death. She performed the duties of her office in a quiet unobtrusive, self-effacing manner, but with indomitable enthusiasm and perseverance. In addition to these admirable qualities her erudition in things Gaelic qualified her for a perfect performance of the secretarial duties. She was the life and soul of the Society, and its position to-day in the esteem of kindred societies is undoubtedly due to her. She was the friend and correspondent of the leading figures in the Celtic world. She was an enthusiast for the perpetuation of the Manx language, and her efforts in this direction have not been unrewarded. In 1915 a handsomely bound copy (of T.E. Brown’s poetical works, with an illuminated frontispiece by Mr Leach, was presented to Miss Morrison by the members of the Manx Society in recognition of her services. Her literary labours included the production of “Mannin,” the last number of which was issued a few days before her death. “Manx Fairy Tales,” “Manx Proverbs and Sayings,” and a list of “Manx Names of Plants,” were from her gifted pen. In conjunction with Miss Corrin, of Castletown, she wrote a valuable monograph on the Manx National Dress. She collaborated with the late A.W. Moore (Speaker of the House of Keys) an important work on Manx Idioms and Peculiar Dialect Forms. This, however, has not yet been published. It is hoped it may be issued as a memorial to those lovers of the little Manx nation. Miss Morrison’s work in connection with the production of the Peel

plays is well-known, and is appreciated most by the author and the players, who know the value of it. Miss Morrison's place will be difficult to fill. In addition to her national work and her literary labours Miss Morrison's abilities found expression in the work of the needle. She was the author of many beautiful specimens of artistic needlework. Miss Morrison was interred in Peel cemetery on Wednesday, the Vicar performing funeral rites. The funeral was attended, all parts of the Island being represented, many members of the Manx Society and a number of the Peel Players being present. The pall-bearers were Messrs C. Cashin, C.H. Cowley, C.R. Shimmin and J.J. Joughin.

"Death of Miss Morrison." *Peel City Guardian* 20 January 1917: [5]a.

ISLE OF MAN WEEKLY TIMES

(7)

MORRISON—On 14th January at Athol-street, Peel, Sophia, daughter of the late Charles and Louisa Morrison.—Interred in Peel Cemetery on Wednesday.

"[Births, Marriages, & Deaths] Deaths." *Isle of Man Weekly Times* 20 January 1917: 5f.

(8)

We are sorry to announce the death of a well-known Manx lady, Miss Sophia Morrison which took place at her home, Athol-street, Peel, on Sunday. She was personally known throughout the Island, and known by name in many parts of the world, as secretary of the Manx Language Society, which office she held since 1901, or two years after the Society was formed. The deceased lady never missed an opportunity of fostering the Manx language and Manx customs, and she travelled into every nook and corner of the Island in search of Manx folk lore. She also undertook the arduous work in connection with the publication from time to time of the various books published by the Society, and acted as editor of the Society's magazine "Mannin." Amongst her last acts, only a few days ago, was the posting to the many subscribers of the newly-published number of "Mannin." The success of the "Peel Players" in the several Manx plays was also due to the untiring efforts of Miss Morrison. She was the author of a well-written volume on "Manx Fairy Tales," and joint author of a little leaflet on "Manx Wild Flowers."

The funeral took place on Wednesday, and was largely attended. Among those assembled at the graveside were the members of the old Peel Manx Language Class and of the "Peel Players," and several members of the committee of the Manx Language Society, but there was also a considerable gathering of the townsfolk generally. The Rev. N.V. Scorer, Vicar of German, conducted the service in the mortuary chapel and at the graveside, and the hymn, "My God, my Father, while I stray," was sung at the graveside. Among the bearers were Messrs J.J. Joughin, C.

Cashen, C.R. Shimmin, and others who had been actively associated with the deceased lady in efforts for the preservation of the Manx language. The chief mourners were Messrs C. and G.S. Morrison, Peel, and Dr F. Morrison, Manchester (brothers), and the Misses L. and M Morrison (sisters).

“Death of Miss Sophia Morrison.” *Isle of Man Weekly Times* 20 January 1917: 9a.

(9)

[9a] Miss Sophia Morrison, whose death all Manx patriots throughout the world will sincerely deplore, was of the true type of enthusiast. She consecrated herself wholly and solely—consecrated a body capable of almost tireless energy, and a cultured and flexible mind—to the beloved cause. Almost every act of her life, every expression of her personality and will power, was inspired by the one ideal; and those who knew her readily believe that her dying moments received a tincture of satisfaction because she had seen the copies of the last issue to date of the magazine “Mannin” safely posted to the subscribers. She was absolutely single-minded; she was as free from the desire of the approbation as from any other less excusable form of ulterior aim. It never occurred to her that she had done anything to be praised for. T.E. Brown, in advising Egbert Rydings on the publication of the latter’s book of Manx Tales, said: “In all this there is no money; ... neither will the Manx public defray the expense of ink and paper. Miss Morrison could have verified that advice abundantly. She sacrificed in that respect as well as in physical ease and mental placidity. To her, less was always gain if it served to promote the cause.

And the cause was one that made vast demands. Miss Morrison lived at a time when the modest flower of the Manx nationality was languishing and almost perishing. The cost of emigration was bearing down the stream of Manx custom and turn of thought to be swamped in the sea of human tide in general, and equally, the tidal wave of immigration was drenching the stream with a foreign element almost at its very source. The old native industries which are maintained a tolerably compact community were decaying before the fierce light of modern economic conditions, and the new occupations to which the community betook itself were in the highest degree calculated to obliterate race consciousness. It did not mend matters, either, that a Government which was considerably incapable to the task of government was doing its best to make Annexation politically desirable. Miss Morrison and the band who formed the Manx Language Society set themselves, as T.E. Brown and A.W. Moore and W.H. Gill had done already, to stem the tide, and to revive the sentiment of national individuality before it expired beyond hope of resurrection. It may be argued that the instrument selected for this purpose, the the original Gaelic language of the Island, was inadequate and artificial; that a flame that had gone spark out cannot be rekindled; [9b] and that this particular flame, if it be not absolutely extinct, is so nearly extinct that its remaining embers can only be kept red for ritual

purposes—like the vestals’ lamps in ancient Rome—and cannot subserve the gracious and vitalising purposes of light and heat. But even if that be true, it may be answered in a materialistic and pleasure-loving age like ours, any altruistic enthusiasm is better than no enthusiasm at all. The spirit, and not the form of expression, is what matters. Those who cherish the form are cherishing the spirit; and those who cherish the spirit will at least reverence the old traditional form. And much of the spirit that has been that has found expression in other forms has been infused by the labours of Miss Morrison and her colleagues. The social and federating activities of the World Manx Association, the literary activities of such writers as “Cushag,” Mona Douglas, Christopher Shimmin, Walter Gill, and others, have flourished in a soil which is been tilled and watered by the Manx Language Society, and some of them are of the Society’s own planting. Miss Morrison herself trod the by-ways as well as the highways of the national mind; nothing Manx was alien to her. Her unrivalled knowledge of Manx folklore and Manx folk song—as witness her charmingly written Manx Fairy Tales, her Manx Proverbs and Sayings, and her editing of Dr Clague’s collection of Manx airs—led her to obtain and maintain the acquaintance and friendship of some of the most eminent specialists in Celtic philology and music. In conjunction with Mr P.G. Ralfe, she published a little work on Manx Wild Flowers, and the archaeological researches of the Isle of Man Antiquarian Society had in her an intensely interested supporter. There has been a decided Manx renaissance during the past decade or so. It was well said at the last festival of the World Manx Association that the poems of T.E. Brown—and, it might have been added, the songs collected by W.H. Gill—have a more unifying influence on Manx people throughout the world than the existence of the House of Keys. And if the Manx idea is at present better able to survive the blows of inevitable circumstance than it formerly was, it owes most of its health and vigour the devoted and skilful nursing of Sophia Morrison.

P.W. Caine [initialled as “P.W.C.”]. “Death of Miss Sophia Morrison: An Appreciation.” *Isle of Man Weekly Times* 20 January 1917: 9a–b.

