

# Manx Notes 73 (2006)

MANX BALLADS AND MUSIC (1898)

A. W. MOORE'S "MANX BALLADS"

[xiv] The object of this publication, as of that of the Manx Carols, is to collect in one volume a curious literature, the greater part of which was threatened with almost certain loss. For less than one half of the ballads and songs given here have been hitherto published,<sup>1</sup> and, as they are scattered in books<sup>2</sup> that are now out of print, they could only have been accessible to very few. The others have been collected from various sources,<sup>3</sup> some oral, some written which in a few years would have yielded much smaller results, because the old or elderly people who alone remember them must soon pass away, and because of the risk of the MSS. being lost.

With regard to the poetical merit of these compositions, I can only say that, even in the original Manx, it is, for the most part, of a very low order, and that very few of them are of the true ballad type.<sup>4</sup> It will be observed that their authors, the majority of whom are clearly illiterate men, are occasionally quite indifferent to the exigencies of either metre or rhyme. Their dates, with the exception of the Children's songs, Bishop Rutter's ballads, and a few others, are comparatively recent, belonging to the latter rather than to the earlier part of the 18th century, while some were written early in the present century.<sup>5</sup> This paucity of early ballads is very remarkable and requires some explanation. It seems to have arisen, in the first place, from the fact that no book was published in the Manx language before the end of the 17th century, the earliest, *The Principles [xv] and Duties of Christianity, for the Use of the Diocese of Man*, bearing the date 1699. There was, however, the MS. Prayer-book completed by Bishop Phillips in 1610, which has recently been published by the Manx Society,<sup>6</sup> but, fifty years later, this had evidently been forgotten, as, in 1663, Bishop Barrow wrote: "There is nothing either written or printed in their language ... neither can they who speak it best write to one another in it, having no character or letter of it

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<sup>1</sup> Less than one-third, till some were published in the *Manx Note Book*, in 1885–57 by the writer.

<sup>2</sup> Chiefly the Manx Society's Publications, Vols. xvi, xx and xxi, and the *Manx Note Book*. As regards the songs etc., published by the *Manx Society* it may be remarked that many of the translations are so absurd, some being the merest paraphrases and others grotesque perversions of the originals, that they are better consigned to oblivion.

<sup>3</sup> For account of those see pages xxviii–ix.

<sup>4</sup> The word "ballad" has, however, often used as a convenient general designation of the contents of this book, but it must be understood that it is not to be applied in its strict sense.

<sup>5</sup> No ballads written during the last fifty years have been published, as they are of a very low order of merit and have not even antiquity to recommend them (see pages xxviii–ix).

<sup>6</sup> Vols. xxxii and xxxiii.

among them.”<sup>7</sup> It would thus appear that whatever native ballads there were then in existence were handed down solely by oral tradition; and they were probably numerous, as we have evidence not only that, as late as 1762,<sup>8</sup> was the ancient ballad of “Fin as Oshin,” which is given below, well known, but that other ballads connected with these heroes, with Cuchullin, with “*Farghail*, the man with the terrible eyes;” and with *Lhane-jiarg*, who had “the bloody red hand,”<sup>9</sup> were commonly sung. Notwithstanding this, the last trace of such ballads as these had, some years later, entirely passed away. How is this to be accounted for? The most potent cause was, I believe, the great revival of religious enthusiasm which was first promoted by the publication of the Bible in Manx, and afterwards extended by the marvellous influence of John Wesley. This is the era of the most of the carols;<sup>10</sup> and it would seem that, in their devotion to them, the Manx people hastened to forget the ballads about such heathenish creatures as Fin and his congeners. To this day a score of Manxmen will know one or more Manx sacred songs for every one that knows a Manx secular song. Another cause was probably the passion for smuggling which arose at the end of the 17th century. Many thus embarked upon an adventurous and exciting career which, by bringing them into contact with men of other nationalities, would tend to lead them to neglect and despise the traditions of their forefathers. Further causes were the large immigration of English residents between 1790 and 1814, the large emigration of Manx [xvi] people, chiefly from the northern and western districts where Manx was more generally spoken than in the southern and eastern districts, which began in 1825, and, finally, the entire indifference, generally speaking, of educated Manx people to their native tongue and national legends. A remarkable proof of this, as regards the last century, is that among numerous letters written by the Manx clergy and others in my possession there is not a single reference to a Manx custom, tradition, legend or ballad; and, as regards this century, the prevalence of the state of feeling referred to is a matter of common notoriety. The chief custodians, then, of Manx ballads have been the illiterate and unlearned, and even they, owing to the causes mentioned have probably lost most of what was best worth keeping. What remains would have been, in part at least, lost, if it had not been for the diligent zeal of William Harrison of

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<sup>7</sup> Ecclesiastical Records.

<sup>8</sup> Lord Teignmouth, writing in 1829, remarked that “of literature there is no trace in the Manks language, excepting some songs composed in the style of Ossian, discovered by Bishop Hildesley,” (*Scotland*, Vol. ii, page 270). If Bishop Hildesley did discover any such songs, they have disappeared long ago.

<sup>9</sup> Letter of Deemster Peter Heywood, *Manx Note Book*, Vol. ii, pages 81–82. The old woman who sang “Fin as Oshin” in 1762 was asked where she learned it, and she replied: “from her mother and grandmother and many more; that they used to sing them at their work and wheels.” (*Ibid*).

<sup>10</sup> See Introduction to *Manx Carols*. (J.C. Fargher, Douglas, 1891).

Rockmount,<sup>11</sup> Robert Gawne of the Rowany,<sup>12</sup> and John Quirk of Carn-y-greie,<sup>13</sup> whose collections have been made within the last fifty years. Some gleanings which escaped them I have been fortunate enough, with the assistance of a few fellow-workers, to secure. All the ballads, from whatever source they have been obtained, have been translated by me, with the assistance of Mr W.J. Cain, into literal English prose,<sup>14</sup> which has been printed in verse form so as to correspond with the Manx in appearance. I am, of course, aware that the result of this operation is by no means pleasing, but my aim is to display faithfully the meaning of the Manx originals, however unpoetical and uninteresting they may be, and not to produce what would certainly have been doggerel rhyme of a very inferior kind. The method I have adopted may possibly afford some assistance to the student of the Manx language, while the other would have been no use to any one. The spelling<sup>15</sup> of the Manx has, in all cases, been brought to the uniform standard of the Manx Bible.

The contents of this book may be conveniently divided under the following headings: (1) Mythical, Semi-historical and Historical ballads; (2) Children's songs; (3) Ballads connected with customs and superstitions; (4) Love-songs; (5) Patriotic ballads; (6) Nautical ballads; (7) Miscellaneous ballads.

[xvii] Under (1) the first ballad which requires explanation is "Fin as Oshin." It is a fragment of a poem, which, according to Deemster Peter Heywood, had been preserved in the following curious manner: In the year 1762, when the first edition of the poems of *Fingal and Ossian*, by Macpherson, appeared and had produced a considerable stir in the literary world, two of the Manx clergy, the Rev. Philip Moore and the Rev. Matthias Curghey (Vicar-General) were at Bishop's Court working at the translation of the Bible into the Manx language. In their intervals of leisure Philip Moore read portions of *Fingal* aloud in the hearing of the Bishop's gardener, an old man who was at work near the door of their laboratory and listening. He steps in on hearing frequent mention of Fingal and Oshian and Cuchullin, etc., and told them he knew who could sing a good song about those men, and that was his brother's wife, a very antient woman, on which they sent for the old dame, who very readily sang them eight or ten verses, which my friend immediately took down in writing, and next day on recollection she brought them the rest, of which he obliged

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<sup>11</sup> The ballads collected by them were printed by the *Manx Society*.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Gawne's collection is in MS.

<sup>13</sup> The ballads collected by them were printed by the *Manx Society*.

<sup>14</sup> Except "Fin as Oshin" and parts of "Mannanan Beg." When the literal meaning has been departed from in the text it is given in a foot note.

<sup>15</sup> It may be mentioned that the spelling of the MSS. was simply faulty and that it throws no light on the language.

me with a copy.”<sup>16</sup> The “friend” referred to is probably the Rev. Philip Moore, to whom the translation may be reasonably ascribed. As regards the Manx it is impossible to say how far he is responsible for the form in which we have it, but it is not unlikely that it was “improved” by him. His copy, with the letter from which I have quoted, was sent by Deemster Heywood to Professor Thorkelin, of Copenhagen, and was by him deposited in the British Museum, together with four other ballads,<sup>17</sup> in 1789. As far as can be ascertained “Fin as Oshin” has never been mentioned by any one since that time, until discovered by the present writer.<sup>18</sup> The first person referred to in it is Fin, or Finn, who was the chief hero of the later Celtic legends, which form a cycle entirely distinct from time of the heroic age. He is said to have been the chief of a band of mercenaries, or robbers, called Fianns, and to have flourished in the second part of the third century. By the Manx he was usually called Fin Mac Coole, in reference to his supposed parentage. His son Ossian, who was reputed to have been the author of most of the poems called after him, is said to have been a famous warrior as well as a great poet, in both of which [xviii] roles he reproduced the character of his father. The connection of Fin and Ossian with the Scandinavian Orre in the Manx poem is significant as agreeing with the historical fact that Man was inhabited by a mixed Celto-Scandinavian race. The ballad of “Mannanan Beg” gives the history of the Island in a curious mixture of fact and fiction up to the year 1507, and it would seem from its abruptly breaking off at that date that it was composed then,<sup>19</sup> but I am unable to say when it was first written down. The terribly dull and prosaic “Coontey Ghiare jeh Ellan Vannin,” “A Short Account of the Isle of Man,” was written by Joseph Bridson in 1760. “Thurot as Elliot” is an account of the naval engagement off Bishop’s Court, between the English commanded by Elliot, and the French by Thurot, on the 28th of February, 1760, in which the latter was defeated and killed. Each squadron consisted of three frigates, Elliot’s flagship being called the “Æolus,” and Thurot’s the “Marechal Belleisle.” The following account of the battle has been handed down in a Peel family: “The Frenchmen after plundering Carrickfergus came towards Peel with the intention of robbing Sir George Moore’s house at Ballamoore, they having on board one of their vessels a butler who had been with Sir George. They were, however, prevented from carrying out this scheme by Elliot, who came round the Calf. His

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<sup>16</sup> Letter in *Manx Note Book*, Vol. ii, pages 81–82.

<sup>17</sup> “Eubonia’s Praise,” “Mylecharaine,” “Scarlett Rocks,” “The Little Quiet Nation.”

<sup>18</sup> It was published by him in the *Manx Note Book*, Vol. ii, pages 80–84.

<sup>19</sup> The version given is taken from Train’s *History of the Isle of Man*, Vol. i, pages 50–55, where it is accompanied by these remarks: “The following curious ballad, which is now for the first time translated into English, was composed in the Manks language. The date of printing has been obliterated from the copy in my possession, which I believe to be extremely scarce.” I have not been able to find any trace either of this printed copy or of a MS. of the poem.

force was inferior to that of the French, but the latter were so loaded with plunder that they could not work their lower guns. The battle was fought between Peel and Jurby Point, and my informant's great grandmother told her that she well remembered hearing the thunder of the cannon when she was a little girl."<sup>20</sup> Only a portion of this ballad seems to have been written at the time of the battle, as, according to Mr Harrison, "the original copy" has been "considerably enlarged, and the whole rendered into a more correct historical fact."<sup>21</sup> "Er Genny Thombagey," "On Want of Tobacco," describes the unhappy results of the [xix] scarcity caused by the American war. It was first sung in Douglas in 1812.

(2) *Children's Songs*. Most of the children's songs in the Isle of Man at the present day are connected with games, especially those which consist of dancing in a ring. They are, however, all of English or Scotch origin,<sup>22</sup> except the following, which may still be heard in the parish of Maughold:

"*Hainey*,<sup>a</sup> *fainey*, fig *na*<sup>b</sup> fag,  
*Ooille*,<sup>c</sup> dooille, Adam a nag,  
 Stony rock calico *vack*,<sup>d</sup>  
 Ham vam vash TIG and away."<sup>23</sup>

The songs given in the text were also evidently connected with games, but they are now either altogether forgotten, or only remembered by old people. Some of them are, perhaps, of considerable antiquity. "Ushag Beg Ruy" was both a ring-dance song and a favourite lullaby. "Doagan," according to Mr Thomas Crellin of Peel, is a game of a very extraordinary character which was played by children 60 years ago. He says that a rude wooden representation of the human form was fastened on a cross and sticks were thrown at it—just, in fact, like the modern "Aunt Sally." But it is quite possible that this game, taken in connection with the very curious words which the children sang when throwing the sticks is a survival of a very much more serious function. In the rhyme "Fer dy Clien Click," the sounds "Click, Clock, Cluck" are made with the tongue against the roof of the mouth. "Yn Dooinniey Boght" was certainly, and "Arrane ny Paitchyn," probably, sung while swinging or playing see-saw. "Tappagyn jiaragey," "Red Top-knots," probably dates from the

<sup>20</sup> From Miss Maggie Kelly, through Miss Graves.

<sup>21</sup> Manx Society, Vol. xxi, page 79. This process was carried out by the Rev. J.T. Clarke, then chaplain of St. Mark's, and he appears to have been indebted to a song called "Thurot's Dream," taken from *Popular Songs, illustrative of the French Invasions of Ireland*, edited by T. Crofton Croker and printed for the Percy Society in 1846, for much of his material. I have been able to supplement and correct Mr Clarke's version by oral evidence.

<sup>22</sup> These have been sent to Mrs Gomme, who has published them in her *Dictionary of British Folk-Lore*.

<sup>23</sup> From Miss Teare. The Manx words are in italics. It was once probably all Manx. (a) "ring," (b) "or," (c) "all," (d) "son."

middle of last century,<sup>24</sup> when top-knots were in vogue as a head dress, though the chorus, “Robin-y-Ree,”<sup>25</sup> would appear to be older, while “My Caillin Veg Dhone,” “My Little Brown Girl,” is suspiciously like the English “Where are you going to, My Pretty Maid,” but it may be, nevertheless, of purely Manx origin. [xx] “Lhigey, Lhigey,” “Gallop, Gallop,” (see pages 216–17) was received from Miss Graves too late for insertion in this section to which it belongs. The girls when playing it kneel on the ground on one knee, and strike the other knee with their right hands as they say each word.

(3) *Ballads connected with Customs and Superstitions.* The meaning of the curious old song “Mylecharaine” is obscure, but we may gather from it that there was an old miser called Mylecharaine, who lived in the Curragh in the parish of Jurby, that he had a daughter who paid more attention to her attire than he did to his, and that in consequence of being the first man in Man who broke through the old custom of not giving a dowry to daughters on their marriage, he was the object of a terrible curse. We may well ask, Why? The two last verses of the song are an addition from the MS. of the late Robert Gawne. Nothing is known of *Juan Drummey*, probably for *Juan y Drummey*, “John of the Back of the Hill,” mentioned in them, but he seems to have behaved in the same way as Mylecharaine, though he acquired his wealth in a different quarter. “Ushtey Millish ’sy Garee,” “Sweet Water in the Common,” relates to the old prance of summoning a jury of 24 men, comprised of three men from each of the parishes in the district where the dispute took place,<sup>26</sup> to decide questions connected with water-courses, boundaries, etc. The process was, first of all, to submit such questions to the Great Enquest, which, according to the customary laws placed on record in 1577, consisted of four men from each parish, or 68 for the whole Island. If the members of the Great Enquest differed, the jury referred to, called the Grand or Long Jury, was summoned, and the final decision, before 1777, lay in its hands. But after that date, both the Great Enquest and the Long Jury were abolished; the former only being restored in 1793, with a traverse to the Keys. This being the case, it would appear that part of this song dates from a period before 1777. It may be mentioned that *Illiam-y-Close* was a well-known Methodist preacher, and that the word *garee* which Kelly and Cregeen translate as “a sour piece of land,” has scarcely an equivalent in English. It is rough undrained pasture land grown [xxi] over with gorse or thorns. “Quoifyn Lieen Vooar,” “Big Flax Caps,” commemorates the fashion of wearing tall linen caps which prevailed in the Isle of Man about eighty

<sup>24</sup> Vide Centilivre’s comedy of the *Artifice*: “The dirtiest Trollop in the town must have her Top-knot and Tickin-shoes.” London, 1760.

<sup>25</sup> It may be noted in this connection that there was a children’s game, called “Robin-y-Ree,” formerly played in Galloway, and that these words occur in an old song known there, see Gomme’s *Dictionary of British Folklore*, Vol. i, pages 257–58.

<sup>26</sup> i.e., in the Northern or Southern half of the Island.

years ago. “Arrane Oie Vie,” “Good-night Song,” is, of course, of general application, but it was the traditional practice to sing it on the way home from the “Oie’l Voirrey,” “Mary’s Feast Eve,” or Christmas Eve service, and after visiting the nearest inn where they probably partook of some hot ale, flavoured with spice, ginger and pepper.<sup>27</sup> “Ollick Gennal,” “Merry Christmas,” was sung by the “waits” at Christmas time. The strange ditty, “Roie ben sheen Tammy,” of which I give three versions, still lingers in Castletown. It is probably merely a fragment of the original song, the words having decreased in number, while losing their meaning. Mrs Ferrier says that the boys came round singing it at Christmas arrayed in sacks, and that they danced a sort of jig to the chorus which they sang very rapidly. The famous “Hunt the Wren,” which has been fully described in my *Folklore of the Isle of Man*,<sup>28</sup> is still generally performed on St. Stephen’s day, though in a very corrupt and degenerate form. The Manx words, now published for the first time, have been derived partly from oral sources and partly from re-translating the English version copied by Mr Harrison in 1844,<sup>29</sup> which from its form is clearly itself a literal translation of the Manx. The very curious “Hop-tu-naa”<sup>30</sup> chorus has also been obtained from various sources. It was sung by boys on Hollantide Eve (11th November). According to Kelly its first line was formerly “To-night is New Year’s Night—‘Hog-unnaa’,”<sup>31</sup> one proof, among others, that this was once the last night of the year. The quaint distich, “Kiark Katreeney Marroo,”<sup>32</sup> “Katherine’s Hen is Dead,” was formerly sung at a fair held on the 6th of December, this being *Laa’l Katreeney*, “Katherine’s Feast Day,” at Colby, in the parish of Arbory. Those who sang it got possession of a hen which they killed and plucked, and, after carrying it about, buried. If any one got drunk at the fair it was said “T’eh er goaill fedjag ass y chiark,” “He has plucked a feather from the hen.” The ballad, “Yn Foldyr Gastey,” “The Nimble Mower,” refers to the strange doings of [xxii] the *Fenodderee*, who is popularly supposed to be a fallen fairy, and to be in appearance something between a man and a goat, being covered with black shaggy hair and having fiery eyes. Many stories are told of his gigantic strength, which he occasionally used to do good offices for those who were kind to him.<sup>33</sup> The ballad called “Arrane ny Ferishyn,” “Song of the Fairies,” contains a mention of Fin McCoole, a favourite Manx hero, whom we have already heard of in “Fin as Oshin,” but who is here degraded to the status of a fairy. It also mentions the *Tarroo-Ushtey*

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<sup>27</sup> See Kennish, *Mona’s Isle*, etc., page 84.

<sup>28</sup> Pages 133-140

<sup>29</sup> Manx Society, Vol. xvi, pages 154-56.

<sup>30</sup> *Folklore of the Isle of Man*, pages 122-25.

<sup>31</sup> Dictionary, Manx Society, Vol. xiii, page 24.

<sup>32</sup> It is probably merely a fragment. The Rev. T.E. Brown suggests that Kiark should be Kiarkle “circle,” and that the rhyme was originally a religious one referring to the martyrdom of St. Katherine.

<sup>33</sup> *Folklore of the Isle of Man*, pages 55-58.

or “Water-Bull,”<sup>34</sup> a strange monster who is well known in Manx legendary lore; the “Fairy of the Glen,” who is evidently the *Glashtin*,<sup>35</sup> a hairy sprite combining the attributes of the Fenodderee with those of the *Cabyl-Ushtey* or “Water-Horse”; and the *Buggane*, who was an Evil Spirit or Fiend,<sup>36</sup> “Berrey Dhone,” “Brown Berrey,” the name of an ox, seems to commemorate the wild pranks of a notorious witch, called *Margayd-y-Stomachey*, “Margaret the Stomacher,” from her costume, who lived at Cornaa, in the parish of Maughold, at the end of last century. She is said to have been a tall powerful woman, as strong as two men and to have had a very bad reputation. There is a pool in the Cornaa river called Poyll Berrey Dhone, in which she is supposed to have drowned the ox before flaying it. My informant told me that his father had seen this woman when he was a boy. “Yn Bollan Bane,” “The White Wort,” is the name given to a fairy melody which is said to have been overheard by a drunken fiddler one New Year’s morning. He plays the melody as he heard it and gives an account of his proceedings.

(4) *Love Songs*. Under this heading there is but little requiring any special mention. The best song, perhaps, is “Ec ny Fiddleryn,”<sup>37</sup> (page 218) which, it will be seen, begins in much the same way as the fragment “Marish ny Fiddleryn” (pages 106–07) written down by the late Robert Gawne some 40 years ago. “Yn Ven-ainshter Dewil” and “Innee jeh’n Bochilley” are possibly imitations of English originals. The dialogue of “Car-y-Phoosee” was written by the Rev. Philip Moore, one of the chief translators of the Bible into Manx, about the year 1750, but [xxiii] the chorus is probably of much older date than this. “Dooiney Seyr v’ayns Exeter,” which is probably incomplete, contains the idea of a ghostly, or demon, lover, which also appears in the fragment “Yn Graihder Jouyllagh,” “The Demon Lover.” This, though clearly an imitation of an old Scotch ballad entitled “The Ship of the Fiend or The Demon Lover,”<sup>38</sup> is given on account of the intrinsic value of the subject. A brief sketch of the contents of the Scotch ballad, which contains 24 stanzas, will show the resemblance between it and the translation of the Manx. The lover had been away for seven years, and on his return found his sweetheart married to another man. He told her that if it had not been for love of her, he might have married “a noble lady.” He reproached her with her faithlessness, and asked her to go away with him. She replied that she has a little son, and therefore could not go. He then promised

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 59–60.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, page 58.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, pages 60–61.

<sup>37</sup> This was first obtained from Thomas Kermodé, Bradda in 1883, by Professor J. Strachan and Father Henebry, and was published in phonetic Manx with a good translation in the *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, in March last. Mr W.J. Cain has since then seen Kermodé and has satisfied himself of the general accuracy of this version which he and I have translated.

<sup>38</sup> From *Allingham’s Ballad Book*.



her gold and silver, and silk and velvet attire if she would consent to do so. This proved too much for her steadfastness as she bade farewell to her infant son and went on board her lover's ship. No sooner had they left the shore than she began to weep for her husband and child, and the demon said:

“O haud your tongue o' weeping  
 Let a' your mourning be;  
 I'll show you how the lilies grow  
 On the banks o' Italie.”

What then happened is best described in the words of the ballad:

“O what hills are yon, yon pleasant hills  
 That the sun shines sweetly on?  
 'O yon are the hills o' Heaven,' he cried,  
 'Where you can never win.'  
 'O what a mountain is yon,' she said,  
 'Sae dreary wi' frost and snow?'  
 'O yon is the mountain o' Hell,' he cried,  
 'Where you and I maun go!'  
 And aye when she turned her round about,  
 Aye taller he seem'd for to be;  
 Until the tops o' that gallant ship  
 Nae taller were than he.  
 He struck the mainmast wi' his hand,  
 The foremast wi' his knee;  
 The gallant ship was broken in twain,  
 And sank into the sea.”<sup>39</sup>

Other fragmentary love songs are “Graih-my-Chree,” “Love of my Heart,” and “Ta mee Keayney,” “I am Lamenting,” the latter being the wail of a deserted lover.

[xxiv] (5) *Patriotic Ballads*. Of the ballads which, perhaps, may be best described as Patriotic, the two oldest were written by Archdeacon, afterwards Bishop, Rutter. They form part of “a choice collection of songs,”<sup>40</sup> composed by him between 1642 and 1651, “for the amusement and diversion of the Right Hon. James Earl of Derby, during his retreat into the Island of Mann in the time of the Oliverian usurpation.”<sup>41</sup> It is not known whether the English words only, or both the English and Manx words, were by Rutter, but, on the whole, it seems probable that he wrote the

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<sup>39</sup> The Manx ballad has been obtained partly from Mr Cashen of Peel, and partly from Mr Quayle of Glen Meay.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted from the British Museum copy of the Introduction to a MS. which is said to have been in the library at Knowsley. Unfortunately it cannot now be found, the late Earl at the request of the writer having very kindly caused a search to be made.

<sup>41</sup> See fn 40.

English and that it was paraphrased in Manx by a native of the Island either in his time or later.<sup>42</sup> If this was so the native must have been a very competent Manx scholar, as the Manx of these songs is the best of the whole collection. The first of the patriotic ballads is “‘shee as Mayurys ny Manninee,’ ‘Peace and Happiness of the Manx People,’” or ‘The Little Quiet Nation,’ being a prologue to the play acted in Castle Rushen before the Right Hon. James, Earl of Derby, to divert his pensive spirit and deep concern for the calamities of his country, occasioned by the Grand Rebellion, begun Anno 1641.”<sup>43</sup> One of these entertainments is described by Thomas Parre, Vicar of Malew, as follows:

“A.D. 1643. The Right Honble James Earle of Derby, and his Right Honble Countesse invited all the Officers, temporall and spirituall, the Clergy, the 24 Keyes of the Isle, the Crowners, with all there wives, and likewise the best sort of the rest of the inhabitation of the Isle, to a great maske, where the Right Hoble Charles Lo: Strange, with his traine, the Right Hoble Ladies, with their attendance, were most gloriously decked with silver and gould broidered workes, and most costly ornaments, braccellets on there hands, chaines on there necks, jewels on there foreheads, earings in there eares, and crowns on there heads, and after the maske to a feast which was most royall and plentifull with shuttings of ornans etc. And this was on the twelfth day (or last day) in Christmas, in the year 1644. All the men just with the Earle, and the wives with the Countesse; likewise, there was such another feast that day was twelve moneth at night, beinge 1643.”<sup>44</sup>

The second is “Creggyn Scarleode,” “Scarlet Rocks,” styled a “Threnodia, or Elegaic Song on the direful effects of the grand rebellion, with a prophetic view of the downfall and catastrophe thereof, composed by the Reverend author on Scarlet Rocks, near Castletown.”<sup>45</sup> [xxv] According to Bishop Wilson, these and Rutter’s other songs were, in his time, in great esteem among the people. And the fact that the songs in vogue at that period were long remembered is corroborated by the following fragment of Cavalier song saving survived as late as 1852, when it was taken down from the lips of an old Manx woman:

“Oh! I love well the Stanlagh name,  
 Though Roundies may abhor him;  
 ’Twould be blithe to see the Devil<sup>46</sup> go home,  
 With all the Whigs<sup>47</sup> before him.

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<sup>42</sup> If we are to take Bishop Barrow’s remark (see page xv) as being literally correct the Manx writer cannot have been a contemporary with Rutter, though, of course, it may have been composed and not written at that time.

<sup>43</sup> Episcopal Register.

<sup>44</sup> See fn 43.

<sup>45</sup> See fn 40.

<sup>46</sup> Once probably intended for Oliver Cromwell.

<sup>47</sup> A modern interpolation.

Through the Island, or over the sea,  
 Or across the Channel with Stanley,  
 Come weal, come woe, we'll gather and go,  
 And live and die with Stanley."<sup>48</sup>

The old woman sang this to the eighteenth century tune of "The King over the Water," i.e., the dethroned Stuart. This was the only verse she knew, but she declared that her husband's mother had "strings of it singing to the childer from morning to night."<sup>49</sup> "Baase Illiam Dhone," "Brown William's Death," may be called a patriotic ballad, as it is an account of a well-known public character, whom it depicts as a patriot put to death through the machinations of wicked enemies, though it also partakes of the character of a lament. The prophecies given in it as to the fate of his enemies were so completely fulfilled that there is more than a suspicion that a portion of the ballad, at least, must have been written long after Christian's death, while the last verse refers to events which took place at the end of the eighteenth century. Christian, being the leader of the popular party in Man and in command of the insular militia, made common cause with the Parliamentary troops when they besieged the Countess of Derby at Castle Rushen in November, 1651. In consequence of this he was ten years later brought to trial and, "was shot to death at Hangoe Hill, the 2nd of January [1662]."<sup>50</sup> The families referred to in the ballad, viz.: the Calcots of the Nunnery and of Ballalough, the Tyldesleys of the Friary (Beemachen), and the Norrises of Scarlet, have all disappeared, while the Christians were again found in the Council, and, for a time, repossessed Ronaldsway. The earliest printed copy of this ballad in existence is a "Broadside," dated 1781, which contains the following prefatory remarks: "A Manks [xxvi] Elegy on the much lamented death of Receiver-General Christian, of Ronaldsway, who (for giving up the ISLE to the Usurper CROMWELL, then MASTER of the Three Kingdoms, and irresistible) was cruelly and unjustly put to Death (January 1662), by a tyrannical and wicked FACTION in the ISLE,—some of whose DESCENDANTS are, at this TIME, endeavouring to destroy the CONSTITUTION of the COUNTRY, and to introduce VASSALAGE and SLAVERY.—It is therefore thought expedient to republish this ingenious PERFORMANCE—to open the EYES of a DELUDED PEOPLE."<sup>51</sup> "Mannin Veen," "Dear Isle of Man," celebrates the advantages of a residence in Man. It probably dates from towards the end of the last century, when the window tax was in operation in England. "Dobberan Chengey-ny-mayrey Ellan Vannin," "Mourning the Mother-tongue of the Isle of Man," was written about 1840 by the late William Kennish, the author of *Mona's Isle and other Poems*. It

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<sup>48</sup> *Manx Sun*, June 12, 1852.

<sup>49</sup> See fn 48.

<sup>50</sup> Malew Parish Register.

<sup>51</sup> The version given in the text is taken from *Manx Society*, Vol. xvi, and this was copied from a MS. of the Rev. J. Crellin, Vicar of Michael from 1771 to 1798.

represents the ghost of the Manx language lamenting the evil consequences which had, and would, ensue from the neglect of it, and from the new-fangled ways which were being introduced. I have included this ballad, though of recent date, and in indifferent Manx, because I wish this book to contain some record of the first Manxman whose poems depicted the customs and superstitions of the Island.

(6) *Nautical Ballads*. These, as would naturally be supposed from the situation of the Island, are numerous but they are nearly all of comparatively recent date, and, for the most part, by composers, probably sailors who had received very little education. The most interesting of them relates the loss of a portion of the Manx herring fleet on the 21st of September, 1787, when about fifty vessels were either totally wrecked, or so much damaged as to be useless, and twenty-one<sup>52</sup> lives were lost. This ballad was written by a man called “Quayle Vessie,” i.e., Quayle the son of Bessie, who lived in Castletown. “Marrinysyn Tiger,” “Voyage of the Tiger,” is a true story written by John Moore, one of the crew of that vessel. The “Tiger” was bought in England by certain merchants in Douglas, in 1778, and she received letters of marque for preying on French and American merchant vessels, England being then at war with those [xxvii] countries. The venture was, however, an unfortunate one, as the “Tiger’s” first and only prize was a Dutch vessel, and, as the Dutch were neutrals, they promptly claimed damages. To satisfy this claim the “Tiger,” according to the ballad, was sold. This, however, is incorrect. Her owners paid the Dutch captain, and, some months later, they sent her on a second, and, as it turned out, an almost equally disastrous cruise. For, when three days out from Douglas, she fell in with the English fleet off the Scilly Islands and was boarded by a boat’s crew from the “Romney,” Captain Johnstone, who carried off all the able-bodied men she had. The “Tiger” had therefore to return to Douglas, and her owners were so discouraged that they sold her for £1,260, though she had cost them £3,645.<sup>53</sup> John Moore was so fond of singing this ballad that he earned the sobriquet of “Moore the Tiger.” After retiring from the sea, he purchased a public-house in the parish of Bride, where he spent his last days. “Yn Chenn Dolphin,” “The Old Dolphin,” “Three Eeasteyryn Boghtey,” “Three Poor Fishermen,” “Yn Sterryn ee Port le Moirrey,” “The Storm at Port St. Mary,” the last of which is evidently incomplete, are tales of shipwreck. “Mannin Beg Veen,” “Dear Little Isle of Man,” written down from the recitation of the late Harry Quilliam of Peel, and “Arrane y Skeddan,” “Song of the Herring,” composed by the Rev. John Cannell, vicar of Conchan (1798–1810), are connected with fishermen and sea-fishing. The curious “Madgeyn y Gliass,” “Madges of the South,” is a satire by the Peel fishermen on their fellows of Port Erin and Port St. Mary. They designate them as “Madges,” i.e., as effeminate creatures, and they

<sup>52</sup> This is the number according to the ballad.

<sup>53</sup> This information is taken from contemporary papers and documents in the possession of the writer.

declare that they are shiftless and impecunious, and quite under the dominion of their wives. I am told by Mr Cashen that the Port St. Mary and Port Erin men had also their satire on the men of Peel, but I have been unable to procure it.

(7) *Miscellaneous Ballads.* Under this heading have grouped together the ballads which are not sufficiently numerous to be placed in distinct sections: The quaint old ballad of “Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey,” “The Sheep under the Snow,” records an incident not uncommon in mountain farming in the winter. The “Nicholas Raby” mentioned in the song is said to be Nicholas Kelly, [xxviii] proprietor of the estates of Baljean, Raby and Graanane in the parish of Lonan, of which he was captain. He was also a member of the House of Keys. According to the Rev. John Quine, Vicar of Lonan, the song was composed when Nicholas Kelly lay in Castle Rushen for the supposed murder of a couple of old people who had a “stocking,” and lived by themselves on the slope of Snaefell. He was afterwards released, the real murderers being discovered. Then come two ballads of a gnomic or didactic character,<sup>54</sup> viz., “Inneenyn Eirinee,” “Farmer’s Daughters,” a homily on the impolicy of marrying for money, and a rhapsody entitled “O! Cre ta Gloyr?” “Oh! What is Glory?” This latter, which was written by Vicar-General Stephen early in the present century, is considered one of the best pieces of verse in the Manx language.<sup>55</sup> “Farmer’s Daughters” was written by a fiddler named Lewin, but generally known by his nickname “Fiddler Green,” who died about seventy years ago. We then have two “Drinking Songs,”<sup>56</sup> “Eubonia Soilshagh,” “Eubonia Bright,” “Eubonia”<sup>57</sup> being an ancient name of the Isle of Man, and “Trimshey Bait ’sy Jough Lajer,” “Melancholy Drowned in a Glass of Strong Drink,” the English versions of both of which were written by Archdeacon Rutter. Next comes the ballad, or “lament,” of “Illiam Walker as Robin Tear,” “William Walker and Robert Tear,” written by Widow Tear of Ballaugh, the mother of the said William and Robert. Of Robert Tear scarcely anything is known, but the Rev. William Walker, LL.D., Vicar-General, was one of the most learned and distinguished men in the Manx Church during the eighteenth century. He was a devoted follower of Bishop Wilson’s, with whom he was imprisoned in Castle Rushen in 1751/2. It was during their imprisonment that they and Vicar-General Curghey are said to have begun the translation of the New Testament. “My Henn Ghooiney Mie,” “My Good Old Man,” “Yn Shenn Lair,”

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<sup>54</sup> There are several other ballads of this kind which have not been published for reasons given below.

<sup>55</sup> I have vainly tried to discover whether the Vicar-General translated from an English original or not.

<sup>56</sup> “A Quiet Little Nation” by the same author (see page 128) might also have been placed in the same on, if that of “Patriotic Ballads” had not had a stronger claim upon it.

<sup>57</sup> In Archdeacon Rutter’s song the word Eubonia is absurdly used as a synonym for “strong drink.”

“The Old Mare,” and “Hi, Haw, Hum” are evidently intended to be comic, as is the fragment “Ny Mraane Kilkenny,”<sup>58</sup> “The Kilkenny Women.” The [xxix] remaining ballads in this section are so fragmentary that it is not possible to place them under a special heading. “Hudeon y Fidder,” “Hudgeon the Weaver,” is the only song which gives an intimation that there was once such a thing as smuggling in the Island. “Yn Maarialh Mooar,” “The Big Robber,” appears to convey the moral that evil is easily learned. A verse of “Skeeylley Breeshey,” “Bride Parish,” is given for the sake of the music, the adventures of the party referred to being described in the rest of the ballad in language too coarse for publication. The purport of “Ny Mraane-seyrey Balla-Willyn,” “The Ladies of Balla-Willyn,” is uncertain. The story of the “Arrane Queeyl-nieuee,” “Spinning Wheel Song,” is that a woman is set by the Queen to do a task of spinning within a given time under penalty, in case of failure, of becoming her slave. The woman found that the task was an impossible one and so she called on the branches of the tree over her head to help her. They did so, with a successful result, and the woman joyfully sings “Old Trit Trot (herself) she (the Queen) never will get.” It is evidently only a fragment, as is “Yn Eirey Cronk yn Ollee,” “The Heir of Cattle Hill.”

I have now to refer to some ballads which have not been included in this collection: They consist of (1) Erotic Ballads,<sup>59</sup> and (2) Modern Ballads. Those in the first class have been excluded because they are too gross and indecent for publication; and those in the second, partly because they are of the most inferior type of doggerel and partly because most of them have been written within the last fifty years. They chiefly consist of temperance songs,<sup>60</sup> which were an outcome of the reform in that direction which began about 1834 and did so much good in the Island

I will now proceed to give an account of the sources from which the ballads and songs given in the text have been derived. They are: (1) PRINTED. From Train’s [xxv]

<sup>58</sup> Kilkenny is the name of a farm in the Parish of Braddan.

<sup>59</sup> The titles of a few of the best known are: (1) “Qulliam Baugh.” (2) “Dy bovms as berchys moar.” (3) “Moghrey dan venainshter.” (4) “Traa va mee ghuilley beg aalin as reagh.” (5) “Va mee baghyn kewt soorey.” (6) “Ail moar, ail moar mullagh ny chrink.” (7) “Walk mee magh morrey Laa Bauldyn.” (8) “Ayns earish Cromwell.” [The spelling is given as in the original MS].

<sup>60</sup> (1) “Pingyn yn ommidan.” (2) “Illiam as Isabel, a short poem with a long prose dialogue.” (3) “Yn jeirkagh Mestallagh.” (4) “Yn Mestallagh.” All the above are directed against drunkenness, while (5) “Mollaght er Thombaga” is in opposition to smoking. The other ballads of recent date are (6) “Megpolleh,” an attempt at imitating an old Manx song by John Ivon Moseley, a coadjutor with the Rev. J.T. Clarke in producing the English-Manx portion of the Manx Society’s dictionary. (7) “T’an emshyr ain quaagh car ny hleeaney” by that excellent old Manxman, the late John Quirk of Carn-y-greie. (8) “Yn coayl jeh’n Lillee,” a vessel which was blown up at Kitterland in December 1852. This was written by Thomas Shimmin, a strange creature who combined the functions of rag-gatherer and poet.

*History of the Isle of Man*: “Mannanan Beg Mac-y-Lheirr.” From *Folklore of the Isle of Man*: “Kiark Katreeny Marroo.” From Manx Society’s Publications: “Thurot as Elliot,” “Coontey Ghiare jeh Ellan Vannin,” “Tappagyn Jiargey,” Mylecharaine” (partly),<sup>61</sup> “Yn Venainshter Dewil,” “Car-y-Phoosee,” “Baase Illiam Dhone,” “Coayl jeh ny Baatyn-Skeddan,” “Marrinys yn Tiger,” “Yn Chenn Dolphin,” “Mannin Veg Veen,” “Arrane y Skeddan,” “Inneenyn Eirinee” (partly),<sup>62</sup> “Eubonia Soilshagh,” “Illiam Walker as Robin Teare,” “Ny Kirree fo Niahtey,” “O! Cre ta Gloyr.” From *Manx Note Book*: “Fin as Oshin,” “Manninee Dobberan harrish Seaghyn Mannin Veen,” “Ushag veg Ruy,” “shee as Maynrys ny Manninee,” “Creggyn Scarleode,” “Mannin Veen,” “Trimshey ’Bait ’sy Jough Lajer,” “Dooinney Seyr v’ayns Exeter” (partly),<sup>63</sup> “Arrane Sooree.” From Kelly’s *Dictionary*: “Doagan.” From Cregeen’s *Dictionary*: “Ollick Gennal.” From *Mona’s Herald*: “Dobberan Chengey-ny Mayrey Ellan Vannin.” (2) MANUSCRIPT. From the late Mr Robert Gawne: “Er Genny Thombaghey,” “Arrane ny Paitchyn,” “Fer Dy Clein Click,” “Yn Dooinney Boght,” “Berry Dhone,” “Quoifyn Lieen Vooar,” “Moir as Inneen,” “Nancy Sooill Ghoo,” “Nelly Veen,” “Isabel Foalsey,” “Iree Seose,” “Marish ny Fiddleryn,” “Three Eeasteyryn Boghtey,” “My Henn Ghooiney Mie,” “Skeeylley Breeshey.” From Mr C. Roeder: “Inneen jeh’n Bochilley.” (3) ORAL. From Mr William Cashen: “Juan-y-Jaggad Kear,” “Ushtey Millish ’sy Garee,” “Madgyn y Jiass,” “Yn Sterrym ec Portle-Moirrey,” “Yn Shenn Laair,” “Hi, Haw, Hum,” “Arrane Queeyl Nieuue,” “Yn Graihder Jouylagh,”<sup>64</sup> “My Vannaght er Shiu,” “Mraane Kilkenny,” “Yn Eirey Cronk yn Ollee.” From Mr Thomas Crellin: “My Caillin Veg Dhone,” “Graih my Chree.” From Professor Rhÿs: “Hudgeon y Fidder,” “Yn Maarliagh Mooar.” From Miss Graves: “Lhigey, Lhigey.” From Mr John Cain: “Yn Bollan Bane.” From Mr Wynter: “Eisht as Nish.” From Mr Thomas Kermod: “Ec ny Fiddleryn.” From Various People:<sup>65</sup> “Hop-tu-naa,” “Yn Folder Gastey,”<sup>66</sup> “Helg yn Dreain,” “Arrane Oie Vie,” “Roie Ben Shenn Tammy,” “Yn Ven-aeg Foalsagh.”

SUMMARY: Printed sources 31, MSS. 16, Oral 26—Total 73. Of this total 51 have been collected by the writer.

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<sup>61</sup> Also Gawne’s MS.

<sup>62</sup> Also Mr R. Kerruish, Maughold.

<sup>63</sup> Also Mr John Quayle, Glen Meay.

<sup>64</sup> See fn 63.

<sup>65</sup> Fragments have been picked up from too many different people to specify, and then pieced together.

<sup>66</sup> Partly also in Manx Society’s Publications.

**Source:** A.W. Moore, "Manx Ballads," *Manx Ballads and Music* (Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896) xiv–xxx.

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STEPHEN MILLER  
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