

Manx Notes 111 (2009)

“DO MAKE A COLLECTION OF MANX PLANTS”

KARL ROEDER AND HIS HERBARIUM (1908)

(1)

Do make a collection of Manx plants. It would be most valuable. Mr Roeder has quite lately sent me about 120 pressed plants which he has collected in the S. of the Island. They are beautiful specimens, each one mounted on a sheet of foolscap, with the date & place of collecting, also Gaelic & Manx names, with a short note as to the particular use of the plant in folk medicine or charms. He also gives the name of the Manx person who told him the Manx name of the plant & its medicinal qualities. This makes the Collection most valuable—I should enjoy showing you the Plants if you come to Peel, & it might help you too, to set things in train.

(2)

I am greatly interested in the Herbarium which you are forming. I wished you lived nearer so that I might show you a small Collection Mr Roeder gave me some years ago. Each of his specimens, gummed to a page of foolscap, has root, stem, leaves, and flowers. [...] Mr Roeder gives at the foot of each specimen—one on a page only—the date when collected, locality, Manx, English, Latin, Welsh, Scotch, Irish, etc, names of the specimens—also plant-lore, & use—if any of the plant.

Source: (1) Letter from Sophia Morrison to J.J. Kneen, 15 September 1908, MNHL, MS 1086/21 C; (2) —, 11 July 1911, MNHL, MS 1086/29 C.



These two extracts give a valuable insight into the collecting technique of Karl Roeder (as well as showing his interest in folk medicine). It is interesting that his collection at this date is in Morrison’s hands and that she gives an indication of its size. Whether J.J. Kneen ever did form his Herbarium we are uncertain; certainly, nothing seems to have survived and he never published on the topic.

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