

Manx Notes 136 (2012)

“FLOUTYN ER VOONJER GHELBY” *

“Floutyn er Vooijer Ghelby” was a satire sung by the fishermen of Port St Mary on those of Peel collected by Sophia Morrison from William Cashen. Fortunately, the story behind the song was recorded:

The gallows were once swept off Hango Hill by the sea and, and washed up on the Niarbyl shore, after which Southside men returned the taunts of their fellows in the West by saying that when the very gallows went round West to hang them it showed how bad they were.¹

The words run as follows:

“Hie yn chriy mygeayrt sheear un laa,
As haink eh stiagh er Niarbyl traie
Dy chroghey mooinjer Ghelby,
Dy chroghey mooinjer Ghelby.

Va eirey mooar ayns Rhaby mooar,
As eirey mooar ayns Balleby,
Ny sodjey sheear ny smessey sthll,
Pyht, pyht, pyht, er vooijer Ghelby.”²

Morrison also valuably noted the performance context of this satire:

When this was sung, the thumbs were snapped at “Pyht.” A Peel man would say it in the same circumstances as an Irishman would invite one “to stand on his coat.” It was a challenge to a fight, and the finger-snapping expressed derision. It was sung to a dance tune.³

Just what tune was used is not known.

The Peel fishermen did not take too kindly to this satire and responded with their own (and lengthier) one, “Madgeyn y Gliass,” which appeared in *Manx Ballads and Music*:

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 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.⁴

* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “Floutyn er Vooijer Ghelby,” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu*, Janaury (2012), [7]–[8]. Reproduced here with sources.

¹ Sophia Morrison, “Manx Scraps (Part 2),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 29 July 1905.

² Morrison, “Manx Scraps (Part 2).”

³ Morrison, “Manx Scraps (Part 2).”

⁴ A.W. Moore, *Manx Ballads and Music* (Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896) xxvii.

As seen, he certainly knew it but as Morrison wrote: “Cashen gave me the satire which loyalty to Peel forebade him giving to Mr A.W. Moore.”⁵

As seen in *KMJ* (August 2011),⁶ Cressy Dodd collected “a skit on some man who burnt someone’s haystacks,” *The Vocabulary of the Anglo-Manx Dialect* (1924) has another one in its pages (quoted in the same piece) and one wonders how widespread these were in Manx vernacular song culture. For example, this from Karl Roeder’s “Manx Notes and Queries” column in the *Isle of Man Examiner* under the confusing title of “Christmas Song”:

“Darrey dy Graase Vorgaig,
 Cha vaik mee riau dty lheid;
 Fiddler ayns Bradda, as piver s’yn Howe,
 As shen Hommy gonnagh ec y thie cloïe er yn clon.”

‘Dorothy Grace Margaret,
 Never saw I the like of you;
 A fiddler in Bradda, and piper in the Howe,
 And old sore Tommy at home, playing with the tongs.’⁷

Quite how Christmas is involved here is difficult to see, but more interestingly this does appear to have the form of a skit on someone. Given that it was openly published in a newspaper, “Dorothy Grace Margaret” cannot refer to an actual person of that name either living or dead. Instead, the name acts instead as a “placeholder,” the community knowing just who is being skitted here behind the name. With such a feature, the song can be sung without change as occasion demanded.

Roeder also has another example, titled by him “Song (Fragment)”:

“Mooinjir yn jiass ta bunnys roit ass,
 Lesh gleck noi geay as tidey,
 Ta’n jough cheet stiagh, yn argid goll magh,
 As Neddy Gawne yn eirey.”

‘The men of the South are nearly driven out,
 With striving against wind and tide,
 Ale comes in and money goes out,
 And Ned Gawne is the heir.’⁸

⁵ Sheet (missing top-half) in the hand of Sophia Morrison, undated, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 5.
⁶ Stephen Miller, “Cressy Dodd: An Unrecognised Manx Song Collector,” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* August (2011).
⁷ Charles Roeder, “Manx Notes & Queries: No. 35, Christmas Song,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 7 December 1901. Reprinted in Charles Roeder, *Manx Notes and Queries* (Douglas: S.K. Broadbent, 1904) 17 col. a.

This may not indeed be a “fragment”: if it is taken as a skit on Edward Gawne of Kentraugh then one verse is enough to make its point.

Moving away from skits, Thomas Kinrade in his *Notes on the Lhane Mooar & Largagh Districts of Kirk Andreas* (1945),⁹ has two accounts of local song creation:

A house once stood on the north end of Gat-e-whing not far from [159].¹⁰ Mrs Ann Gawne said a woman known as “Kate Yane” lived there and had money stolen from the house while she was visiting relatives at Kirk Bride. Enquiry was made and when matters began to look serious Kate was advised to go to Kirk Bride again and perhaps the money would be returned. She went, and sure enough found a part of the money in the house and she came back. A topical song in Manx was made about the incident. Mrs Gawne repeated a verse, the last line being “Yn argid mooar Kate Yane.”¹¹

William Wade, who lived at the corner of the road by the Largagh had been a farmer, and about 1890 had reached a fairly advanced age. His son, Mr John Wade lived with him. He was said to have possessed some skill in butchers’ work earlier in life. A bottlenose whale was washed ashore near Gob ny Rue and Mr Wade spent some time removing fat from the carcass. A topical song written about the whale said that “Billy Wade the butcher swore a solemn oath | That if he had a butcher’s knife he’d stab the bottlenose.”¹²

Referenced here are songs in both Manx and English and it is unlikely that such activities were restricted to this part of Andreas and then just Andreas alone. Being created around a specific event, such material is not likely to have lasted and will have been dropped when another such occasion arises that needs a song.

Here we have two genres of Manx vernacular song that have been little considered and poorly recorded: the skit and the topical song (to use Kinrade’s own words). Both point to a level of vitality of Island song culture and one not captured by the folk song collectors of the 1890s. Before deciding what are taken to be either fragments or partial texts of songs as such, closer attention needs to be paid as to whether they better fall into one of the genres mentioned here.

STEPHEN MILLER

VIENNA 2012

⁸ Charles Roeder, “Manx Notes & Queries: No. 36, Christmas Custom,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 7 December 1901. Reprinted in Roeder, *Manx Notes and Queries* 21 col. a.

⁹ Thomas Kinrade, *Notes on the Lhane Mooar & Largagh Districts of Kirk Andreas* (1945), MNHL, MS 1543 C.

¹⁰ This is the plot number from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey map of the area (1869).

¹¹ Thomas Kinrade, *Notes on the Lhane Mooar & Largagh Districts of Kirk Andreas* (1945), p.21, MNHL, MS 1543 C.

¹² Thomas Kinrade, *Notes on the Lhane Mooar & Largagh Districts of Kirk Andreas* (1945), p.27, MNHL, MS 1543 C.

*

REFERENCES CITED

- Miller, Stephen. "Cressy Dodd: An Unrecognised Manx Song Collector." *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* August (2011): [9].
- Moore, A.W. *Manx Ballads and Music*. Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896.
- Morrison, Sophia. "Manx Scraps (Part 2)." *Isle of Man Examiner* 29 July 1905: 8a.
- Roeder, Charles. "Manx Notes & Queries: No. 35, Christmas Song." *Isle of Man Examiner* 7 December 1901: 6a.
- . "Manx Notes & Queries: No. 36, Christmas Custom." *Isle of Man Examiner* 7 December 1901: 6a.
- . *Manx Notes and Queries*. Douglas: S.K. Broadbent, 1904.

