

Manx Notes 192 (2014)

“MANX FOLKLORE ON THE WIRELESS.
DR JAMES LYON BROADCASTS” *
(1930)

In 1930, the *Isle of Man Examiner* for 26 December carried the following piece (quoted here in full):¹

One of the finest broadcasts which it has been our pleasure to listen to came over from Birmingham (Midland Regional) Station on Saturday night, when Dr James Lyon, of Liverpool, gave an hour's talk on “Manx Folk Songs,” with pianoforte illustrations by himself and vocal illustrations by a quartette.

Dr Lyon, who has published several arrangements of Manx airs, has been studying Manx music for 36 years, and the best pickings from his vast experience were given to the public on this occasion. He dealt in an interesting fashion with the influence of insular history on the native music, and after stating that he had judged at competitions here (some years ago he was the adjudicator at the Cruinnaght), he paid tribute to Manx singers for their fine enunciation.

The quartettists assisting Dr Lyon were Misses Emily Walden (soprano) and Winifred Payne (contralto) and Messrs Geoffrey Dams (tenor) and Harold Howes (bass), and the numbers they rendered included “Love's Flight” (from W.H. Gill's *Manx National Songs*), “Arrane Sooree” (Dr Lyon's four-part arrangement), “Bollan Bane,” an unnamed carol tune, and “Mylecharaine” (Dr Lyon's solo arrangement), “The Sheep under the Snow” (Dr Lyon's arrangement for solo and quartette refrain), an unnamed ballad tune which is understood to be unrecorded, “Mannin Veen” (Dr Vaughan Williams' four-part arrangement), “Marry me, Mary Veen” (Dr Lyon's arrangement of the air known as “Berrey Dhone”), “The Ploughman's Song” (from “Manx National Songs”) and “Carval Drogh Vraane,” which Dr Lyon specially recommended as a more suitable tune for a Manx National anthem than the present one.

James Lyon (1872–1949) is a figure of who little is still known about his involvement with Manx song: he was a judge at the Guild in 1909, and once again at the Third Cruinnaght in 1926, a somewhat wide gap in appearances. He said in 1909 that he had been a regular visitor to the Island for twenty-five years and claimed to have collected on each occasion. He had lectured previously on the topic in 1907, and that year in a letter to William Cubbon he was contemplating publishing a selection of

* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “Manx Folklore on the Wireless. Dr James Lyon Broadcasts' (1930),” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* September (2014), [8]. Reproduced here with sources.

¹ “Manx Folk Lore on the Wireless. Dr James Lyon Broadcasts,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 26 December 1930.

those collected.² This never came to fruition. Here in 1930, Lyon is still claiming a long standing engagement with Manx song, some thirty-six years though it was twenty-five in 1909; the 1930 account would make the year to 1896, the date of the appearance of both *Manx National Songs* and *Manx Ballads and Music* and so more likely the correct date of the start of his interest. But what of his putative collection? No personal papers are known to have survived and so its size cannot be determined. The report of the 1930 broadcast has the intriguing mention that amongst the musical illustrations was “an unnamed ballad tune which is understood to be unrecorded.” At last, firm evidence that Lyon was indeed a collector of Manx vernacular song.

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VIENNA, 2014

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REFERENCES

Anon. “Manx Folk Lore on the Wireless. Dr James Lyon Broadcasts.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 26 December 1930: 2d.

Miller, Stephen. “‘I hope to bring out a volume of Manx tunes.’ James Lyon (1872–1949).” *Manx Notes* 21 (2004): 1–4.



² Reproduced in Stephen Miller, “‘I hope to bring out a volume of Manx tunes.’ James Lyon (1872–1949),” *Manx Notes* 21 (2004).