

Manx Notes 193 (2014)

“OH, MANNIN VEG VEEN,
TA MY CHREE STHILL LHIAT HENE”

A MANX BROADSIDE ABOUT THE “MANX FAIRY” STEAMER *

In a talk by Robert Sim to the Crosby Wesleyan Guild in 1916, “Memories of Old Crosby, 1868–1900,” he recalled amongst other things the opening of the railway line from Douglas to Peel in 1873.¹ “As I said, huge crowds had gathered at the station, and while waiting for the great thing to appear some cheap jacks from over the water were there selling ballads which had been written for the event and singing the tunes set to them.” He also recalled the first few lines of one of these topical ballads:

“Come all ye Lads and Lasses gay,
Give ear a while to what I say,
The Duke of Sutherland has come down
To pay a visit to Douglas Town;
So all be happy, blithe and gay,
For the opening of the new Railway.”

And as to the popularity of these ballads: “[t]hese things were selling among the people like hot cakes.” While there is no evidence that such ballads passed over into the tradition, they were after all ephemeral in both senses of the word, they remain an aspect of musical life in the Island regardless as to what one might think either of the prose or rhyme scheme employed.

Earlier, in 1853, there had been a race (of sorts) between two rival packet companies to the Island, the “Manx Fairy” sailing from Liverpool to Ramsey and beating the “Mona’s Queen” that was sailing to Douglas from the same port by eleven minutes.

On the occasion of the Fairy’s first trip, some Manx lines were printed with an English translation, and a man was singing them ballad-fashion, when feeling a little curiosity, I gratified it by obtaining a copy, a transcript of which I annex, Manx and English; and should your pages not be better occupied, perhaps you will accord space for insertion thereof.²

Space was indeed accorded and so we have an example here again of topical composition but this time in Manx and of course by someone from the Island and not from England as above. That the ballad was in Manx shows that the linguistic

* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “Oh, Mannin veg veen, ta my chree sthilla lhiat hene’: A Manx Broadside about the ‘Manx Fairy’ Steamer,” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* October (2014), [10]. Reproduced here with sources.

¹ Robert Samuel Sim, “Memories of Old Crosby, 1868–1900,” 8, (read at Crosby Wesleyan Guild 1916), MNHL, MD 260. Subsequent quotations are taken from this lecture.

² J. Beale, “Manx Lines on Manx Fairy Steamer,” *Notes & Queries* (4th ser.) ii (1868).

shift in the Island was in large part still about to come and one wonders on which other occasions such ballads were produced for sale and more importantly were sung.

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VIENNA, 2014

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REFERENCES

Beale, J. "Manx Lines on Manx Fairy Steamer." *Notes & Queries* (4th ser.) ii (1868): 368a.

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[LINES ON THE MANX "FAIRY STEAMER"]

- I I Oh, Mannin veg veen, ta my chree sthill lhiat hene,
As bwooishal dhyt mie son dy braa;
As tra hed ym, my annym goit voym,
4 Bee'm bwooishal sthill mie da Rumsaa.
Ta'n "Ferish" er roshtyn dy bieau voish shenn hostyn.
Ny queelyn eek tappee chyndaa;
As laadit dy slich va shin fakin dy v'ee,
8 Ooillee bwooishal cree mie da Rumsaa.
- 1a I Oh, Mona, my darling, my heart is still thine,
My blessing upon thee I pray;
And when I am dead, and my spirit is fled,
4 Success unto Ramsey I say.
The "Fairy" has come, and swiftly has run,
Her paddles go quickly around;
Well loaded she were with passengers rare,
8 All wishing success to the town.

Source: J. Beale, "Manx Lines on Manx Fairy Steamer," *Notes & Queries* (4th ser.) ii (1868), 368a.

