

Manx Notes 224 (2015)

“MYLECHRAINE” *

1. THE WESLEYAN MUTUAL SOIREE SPELLING BEE (1901)

[*To the Editor of the Peel Guardian.*]

Sir,—Please allow me to offer an apology to several ladies and gentlemen who took part in the spelling “bee” held at the Wesleyan Mutual Soiree, on the evening of January 2nd. Acting as judge I pronounced them to be wrong in the spelling of the word “Mylecharane.” As, however, it was afterwards discovered that the word could be spelled correctly in several ways it was decided to repeat the contest, but the lateness of the hour prevented this arrangement being carried out.—Yours, etc., J.B. SHIMMIN.

[J.B. Shimmin, “[To the Editor of the Peel Guardian].” *Peel City Guardian* 12 January 1901: 2g.]

2. “HE GOT ‘NAWTHIN’” (1937)

All the Mylecharaines lived in the parishes adjoining the Curragh—Ballaugh, Jurby, Lezayre—and in the ballad there is reference to diggings in the Curragh and finding treasure. And here is another piece of romance. A Mylecharaine family possessed a curious silver cross, supposed to have been handed down for countless generations. It was shown to the Manx Society’s editor at some date before 1873, and is illustrated in one of the Society’s volumes. It was unquestionably very ancient, and was regarded as something mystical.

Let us lighten the burden of this antiquarian lore with a humorous story. A concert was held in a schoolroom or chapel in the Curragh district, and a lady sang the Mylecharaine song. The chairman introduced her, and explained that the song was about her, and explained that the song was about old Mylecharaine, who was the first man in the Isle of Man to give his daughter a marriage portion. “But,” he added, “it doesn’t run in the family. My wife was a Mylecharaine, and I got nawthin’ with her!”

[“[At Random] He Got ‘Nawthin’.” *Isle of Man Times* 4 September 1937: 10g.]

For further on the twists and turns of “Mylecharaine” (or, for that matter, “Mylecharane”) in the life and times of the Island, see Fenella Bazin, “‘Mylecharaine’: A Forgotten Call to Nationhood,” pp. 336–48 in *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation*, eds. Ian Russell and David Atkinson (Aberdeen: The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2004).

STEPHEN MILLER, 2015

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