

Manx Notes 247 (2017)

“MR A.W. MOORE’S COLLECTION IS
LESS ALTERED THAN MR GILL.” *

“Mr A.W. Moore[']s collection is less altered than Mr Gill.”¹ So wrote Dr John Clague to Sophia Morrison in 1908, and yet A.W. Moore and his *Manx Ballads and Music* from 1896 seems now to be somewhat forgotten in the whirl of pieces here in *KMJ* about the Gill brothers, Dr John Clague, Sophia Morrison, Mona Douglas and other collectors active in the Island in the 1890s and afterwards. *Manx Ballads and Music* had a slow gestation due to the incompetency (as Moore saw it) of the Johnson Brothers of Douglas entrusted with its printing,² and so inconsistencies seem to have crept into the text and there are also a number of puzzles as such within its pages. For example, Moore lists his helpers in collecting the tunes and the number they each collected, and he gives the names of the singers and the tunes taken down from each one of them. One is then left to try and match the singers to the collectors to figure out oneself which singers were visited by Harry Bridson and Moore’s other helpers. But at least Moore did provide the basic information in the first place, it must be said. Then there is the lack of any alphabetical listing of either the texts or tunes that appear in the book, nor an index of first lines. This makes the work difficult to work with and one must produce indexes of one’s own to overcome this lack.

Returning to Clague, he was referring to *Manx National Songs*, edited—and devised it must be said—by W.H. Gill, that appeared the same year and which was unabashed in how the material was presented there. Harmonised for the pianoforte, with lyrics in English that bore little—if any—connection to the original texts (which were never collected in the first place it seems), it was destined for the parlour and drawing room and there it was indeed a success. *Manx Ballads and Music* was

* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “Mr A.W. Moore’s collection is less altered than Mr Gill,” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* March (2017): [13]. Reproduced here with sources.

1 Letter from Dr John Clague to Sophia Morrison, 3 May 1908, MNHL, MS 09495, Sophia Morrison Papers, Box 2.

2 (1) “As to the book of ballads I am in despair. It ought to have been issued months ago, but up to the present Johnson has only succeeded in printing 30 pages of it! He has quite surpassed himself in dilatoriness & I have really given the whole thing up. I have told him that I do not expect to live to see it through! This does not result from any want of pushing on my part. I send for proofs every day!” Letter from A.W. Moore to G.W. Wood, 13 September 1895, MNHL, MS 1180/22 A. (2) “Johnson has succeeded in printing 40 pages of my Manx ballads in the course of a year!” Letter from A.W. Moore to G.W. Wood 17 November 1895, MNHL, MS 1180/23 A. (3) “My Manx ballads & tunes are progressing slowly. I hope it will be issued by July, but I doubt it!” Letter from A.W. Moore to G.W. Wood, 19 February 1896, MNHL, MS 1180/26 A.

produced in a limited print run and never saw a second impression, nor did Moore ever return to the topic of folk song. Bar one manuscript,³ the material behind the work is now lost.

T.E. Brown, for one, was charmed by *Manx National Songs*, spending all day the 26 June 1896 with Gill himself, as he later wrote to Egbert Rydings: “We spent the whole of Friday ‘from morn to dewy eve,’ over his Song-book, and a most enjoyable time we had.”⁴ He went on to add that “Mr Moore will have to entrench himself within his antiquarian position, which is a true one and teneable, but hardly popular.” Yet it remains still to be seen just what was entailed by Moore’s “antiquarian position” and both then and now, whether it was and remains “a true one and teneable.” To this end, presented here are a number of guides—working ones it must be stressed—to aid in that work of re-assessment. This will in no way diminish the achievement of *Manx Ballads and Music*, but rather allow a better understanding of the work. It is indeed “less altered than Mr Gill,” but it remains to be seen by how much that is so.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2017

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WORKING GUIDES TO A.W. MOORE MANX BALLADS AND MUSIC (1896)

1. *The Sources of the Texts*
2. *The Tunes*
3. *The Correspondence*

Available for download from <<http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/~stephen/guides>>



³ “Manx ‘Odds & Ends’,” notebook compiled by A.W. Moore, undated, MNHL, MS 221 A.

⁴ Letter from T.E. Brown to Egbert Rydings, 28 June 1896, MNHL, MS 1272/52 A. Appears in edited form in “T.E. Brown–Egbert Rydings,” *Mannin* 9 (1917), 508–09.