

Manx Notes 252 (2017)

“WHO IS MONA DOUGLAS?” (10)
A CONCERT OF MANX TRADITIONAL MUSIC
(1923)

- A. “[Advert] A Concert of Manx Traditional Music,” *Mona’s Herald* 18 April 1923, 4c.
- B. “[Advert] Manx Folk-Song Concert,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 18 April 1923, 4c.
1. “Folk-Song Concert,” *Mona’s Herald* 25 April 1923, 5f.
2. “The Folk Songs of Mann,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 27 April 1923, 2b.
3. Mona Douglas, “The Folk Songs of Mann: To the Editor,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 4 May 1923, 4g.

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- A. “A CONCERT OF MANX TRADITIONAL MUSIC,” *MONA’S HERALD* (18 APRIL 1923)



B. "MANX FOLK-SONG CONCERT," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (18 APRIL 1923)



I. "FOLK-SONG CONCERT," MONA'S HERALD (25 APRIL 1923)

The folk-song concert, given in the Hail at St Andrew's on Saturday night, in aid of the Manx Pageant Fund, was delightfully varied, and while it perhaps it appealed most to the initiated—those patriots who revel in the lore of their native land—yet it had also its fascination for those mortals who can appreciate music in all its forms. Each item was given with understanding, and there was nothing derogatory to the performers or the folk-songs in the fact that the classical solos informed on the violin by Prof. Barfoot received the warmest appreciation, for his performances were of unusual merit. During the concert, Miss Mona Doughts, whose authority on Manx folklore is unquestioned, appealed to all persons who knew of old folk-songs which had not been published, to communicate with her, with the idea of having them preserved. The programme included many items by the Peel Quartette Party: solos by Miss Doris Callister, Miss Margaret Christian, and Messrs J. Christian and T. Watterson; and duets by Miss D. Callister and Mrs Blenkhorn: also violin solos by Prof. Barfoot. The accompanists were Miss E. Christian, L.R.A.M., and Mr A. Eastwood.

2. "THE FOLK SONGS OF MANN," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (27 APRIL 1923)

Mr W.H. Gill did a magnificent work for the Isle of Man when he collected the ancient folk-songs of the country, Celtic or otherwise, and, by clothing them with appropriate words and with pianoforte accompaniments, made them suitable for public or private performance; but there is a danger of a few of the more obvious and otiose of the airs of Mr Gill's book being sung to death, while the rest remain as neglected and forgotten as if Mr Gill and his collaborators had never gone to the trouble of preserving them. Besides, Mr Gill's *Manx National Songs* only professes to be a selection, although the complete result of his labours is to be found in that

scarcely-known second book of his, *Manx National Music*; other collectors and arrangers have tried their hand, and finally, there are undoubtedly some few strays which have eluded the search of any collector. With a view to stimulating an interest in the less familiar and popular Manx airs, Miss Mona Douglas, the Island's gifted young poet, arranged a concert in the St. Andrew's Hall, Douglas, on Saturday evening. There was a moderate-sized audience, and every item in a delightful programme was spontaneously applauded. The Peel Quartette Party (Misses D. Callister and A. Cashen, and Messrs J.E. Clucas and T. Watterson) sang three part-songs, arranged by celebrated modern musicians. "Mannin Veen," "Arrane Sooree" and "Keavrt va mee meg" ("Once I was young"); Miss Callister sang "The Three Poor Fishermen," "Tappaghyn Jiargey" ("The Rival Cockades," in Mr Gill's book), and Robin and Betsy; Misses Callister and Cashen sang Miss M.L. Wood's arrangement of one of the airs bearing the name of "Ushag veg Ruy"; and Mr Watterson sang "Heroes All," "The Cutting of the Turf," and "Orry the Dane." Miss Margaret Christian sang "Longing" (to the air of "The Song of the Jennys"), "Sweet Water in the Gareys," "Mylechraine," and "T'eh traagoll thie" (known in Mr Gill's book as "The Parting Hour"). Mr John Christian again gave a superb rendering of the lovely air. "O, what if the Fowler," and also of "My Caillin Veg Dhone" ("Fair Maids of Mann," in Mr Gill's book), "Graih-niy-Chree" and "Kirree fo Niaghtey." Miss Douglas herself sang two unpublished airs of singular beauty, to the violin accompaniment of her father, Mr Frank Douglas, who now resides at Ballarragh, Laxey. Two numbers from a Celtic suite arranged by the famous composer, Josef Holbrooke, which is now passing through the Press, were rendered on the piano by Miss Edith S. Christian, L.R.A.M., who also accompanied the vocal items on the programme. A touch of the universal in music was provided by Professor Barfoot, of Baldrine, who gave three exquisite violin solos, and collaborated with Mr A. Eastwood in a violin and piano duet.

During the proceedings Miss Douglas appealed to everyone acquainted with any old national air not hitherto published, to communicate it, so that it might be preserved for the pleasure of future generations.

3. MONA DOUGLAS, "THE FOLK SONGS OF MANN: TO THE EDITOR," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (4 MAY 1923)

To the Editor,

Sir,—

While I am grateful for the friendly tone of your article in last Saturday's *Examiner* on the Manx Folk-song concert held at St Andrew's Hall on April 21st, I should like, with your permission to make one or two remarks thereon.

In the first place, although I feel that everyone who cares for our Folk-songs must appreciate the pioneer work done by Mr W.H. Gill in his collection, and arrangement of so many airs, yet I cannot but think it a pity that the writer of your

article did not acknowledge the credit due to the late Dr Clague, of Castletown, and Speaker A.W. Moore for their work in this field; particularly as, although Mr Gill's work was well represented on our programme, as it deserves, some of the songs used were specially chosen from Moore's *Manx Ballads and Music*, partly because in some cases Moore's version of an air seems to be closer to the traditional melody than Gills, and the settings in his book simpler and therefore better as folk-songs (most of them being done by Miss M.L. Wood); and partly because Moore has nearly always preserved the original Manx words of the songs. That these words are often charming and have the real folk-song touch, I think most people would admit who heard the literal translations of them sung at the concert. The greater part of Dr Clague's collection of airs is, unfortunately, still in manuscript; but a number of his tunes were published in *Mannin* between 1913 and 1917, and one of the two airs characterised in your article as "unpublished" was among these, although neither of the two has been harmonised or sung in public so far as I know.

Also, I think that when such well-known musicians as Vaughan Williams, Lyon and Somervell show their interest in Manx folk-songs by writing much-needed four-part arrangements of them, it would be well to acknowledge their work by name in a report of a concert where it is sung!

I am sorry to seem so critical, but I feel that, as we have so few workers in the field of Manx folk-song, it is very desirable that any public notice of this work should mention not one or two only, but all, for all deserve our gratitude.—Yours etc.,

MONA DOUGLAS.

Ballarragh, Laxey.

[The writer of the article now under criticism sends the following reply: "Dr Clague has undoubtedly earned the deepest gratitude of lovers of Manx folk-song, and the collection which is loosely spoken of as Mr W.H. Gill's is in reality the joint work of Mr Gill and Dr Clague, and in some minor degree of the late Deemster Gill. Mr Gill, as a qualified musician, provided the airs with pianoforte accompaniment, and in many cases obtained lyrics for them, and he also organised and supervised the work of publication. Mr Gill, in fact, had access to every air picked up by Dr Clague in his tours of the countryside, and out of over 200 contained in Dr Clague's manuscripts, scarcely a dozen are not included in Mr Gill's second book, *Manx National Music*—which cannot be too frequently commended to the public attention. Of those excluded, several, although beautiful airs, do not seem to be Manx at all—despite the circumstance that they have been sung to words in the Manx language. The collection made by Mr A.W. Moore, and harmonised by Miss M.L. Wood, was, however, an independent enterprise, and a most worthy one, and in some cases Mr Moore's version differs markedly from Mr Gill's. It is legitimate to prefer one variant to another, and sometimes the air communicated to Mr Moore does seem more spontaneous. Very respectfully, one cannot agree with Miss Douglas

as to the value of the words preserved by Mr Moore along with the airs. These friendly little differences of opinion on minor points do not prevent one from appreciating Miss Douglas' efforts to stimulate among Manx people an interest in and love for our country's ancient melodies, and from wishing her the utmost success in any similar efforts in the future."—Editor *I.O.M. Examiner*].

STEPHEN MILLER, 2017