

Manx Notes 356 (2018)

KIARK CATREENEY MARROO

“DR CLAGUE I : 8.” *



THE ORIGINAL COLLECTION | OF | MANX FOLK MUSIC | [RULE] | MADE BY | HIS HONOUR THE DEEMSTER GILL | MR W.H. GILL & DR. CLAGUE | COMPLETED IN 1895 & 1896. MNHL, MS 09702, Deemster J.F. Gill Papers, Box 1. Bound up and paginated in 1912 by Mrs Lucinda Gill.

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On 27 November 1894, W.H. Gill wrote to his brother, Deemster J.F. Gill, and in the course of the letter mentioned that “you might deliberate with the Doctor as to the fate of the tune with the title ‘Kiark Catreeney Marroo.’ It is a nice point for you to settle, viz. Is it Manx or Scotch?”¹ By Doctor was meant Dr John Clague, and Gill was somewhat despondent as “I find it note for note in a book of professedly Scotch Songs. I am afraid we have not a leg to stand on, especially as the tune does not appear in ‘Mona Melodies,’” continuing, “[b]ut perhaps the Doctor can tell us something of its history.” Clague was quick with his reply, and in a letter to the Deemster from early December commented that:

As to Kiark Catreeney Marroo I think it is an old Gaelic tune and is as much Manx as it is Irish and Scotch. I have seen the tune in a collection of Irish airs as well as of Scotch airs, the Irish title being “The ducks dang my daddie”—the Scotch one “The deuks gang o’er my daddie.”²

He went on to add that:

I believe that the “Kiark Catreeney Marroo” procession—by the bye tomorrow is the day for it—is one of the oldest of our national customs. Much older than “Hunt the Wren” & the “White Boys.”

* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “Kiark Catreeney Marroo: ‘Dr Clague I : 8,’” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* December (2018), [17].

¹ Letter from W.H. Gill to Deemster J.F. Gill, 27 November 1894, MNHL, MS 09702, Deemster J.F. Gill Papers, Box 2.

² Letter from Dr John Clague to Deemster J.F. Gill, 5 December 1894, MNHL, MS 09702, Deemster J.F. Gill Papers, Box 2.

Associated with Colby Fair held each year on 5 December, the interest here is not with the calendar custom itself, which can be readily read up in Clague's own *Cooïnaghtyn Manninagh: Manx Reminiscences By the Late Dr John Clague* (Castletown: M.J. Backwell, n.d. [but 1911]) 43 & 45, but with the tune itself.

Whilst the Gill brothers had conducted two collecting tours in the Island that year, they did not collect Kiark Catreeney Marroo, it came from Clague, and the Deemster made a copy of it as shown here ([OC] 94/2). Clague and the Gills passed each other the tunes they had collected, the difference being that while the latter marked the ones they received, Clague did not. W.H. Gill devised a simple code, as he explained to his brother in May 1895, “[i]n the transcripts I sent you the referencing at the left hand bottom corner refer to the Sources,”³ and as an illustration, “C.I = Dr Clague’s 1st lot[.]”

This “1st lot” consists of fourteen tunes, but numbers eleven and twelve, however, are not present in the transcript made by the Deemster. As it contains Kiark Catreeney Marroo (c.1.8), the subject of the letter dated 27 November 1894, this first batch of material from Clague was evidently in W.H. Gill’s hands by that date. Of the twelve tunes that are present, nine are titles recognisable from *Mona Melodies* (1820), and the remaining three are Car y Phoosee, Kiark Catreeney Marroo, and Ree Ben Juan Tammy. Turning to Clague’s own tune books, now in the MNHL, they are all present there but as arrangements with the exception of Hunt the Wren (c.1.9). As regards Hunt the Wren ([C1] 49/3), Clague notes the source as being Annie Crellin of Orrisdale and dated 11 September 1897 (as Anne Margaret Crellin, she was the Secretary of the Folk Lore Committee of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society). If this is the date he obtained it from her, as opposed to entering it in the tune book, then the version sent to Gill comes from another source. Leaving aside the issue of the form of the *Mona Melodies* titles in the Deemster’s transcript, the trio of tunes mentioned above are transcribed unarranged and as collected by Clague and as such are known now only from this source. The structure and composition of the Clague tune books has yet to be fully understood, and whilst we can no longer “deliberate with the Doctor” directly, there is the Deemster’s transcript that can be used instead as here.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2018



³ Letter from W.H. Gill to Deemster J.F. Gill, 22 May 1894, MNHL, MS 09702, Deemster J.F. Gill Papers, Box 2.