

Manx Notes 358 (2019)

THE BAND STRUCK UP “OLD MYLECHARANE”

(1877) *

In 1877, Manx folk living in California gathered for a picnic on Saturday, 9 June, the second one so held it was said.¹ The venue was Shultzin Park, in Alameda County, near Oakland. Most sailed there from San Francisco, the voyage taking around forty-five minutes, and “[t]he band engaged for the day played ‘Ellan Vannin,’ and ‘Lovely Mona’ on board [...]” They then took the train to the Park itself, a trip of half-an-hour. The day was hot, nearly 37C in the shade, “something unusual for this part of the country.” Lunch was at 12 noon sharp, and after clearing up by the women, some of the boys playing football, came the dancing in a pavillion erected for the occasion, some one-hundred feet long and sixty wide. “Conspicuous in the midst” was the Three Legs of Man amongst the Star and Stripes and the Union Jack. “All things being ready for the dancing, the band struck up ‘Old Mylecharane’ [...] when young and old joined and marched round the pavillion with a will that showed they appreciated the good old tune.” The programme proper then began with the following dances: Mona Delight (quadrille), Happy Manxman (waltz), Hop-dy-naa (polka), Ballaugh (lancers), Laxey Glen (schottische), Peel Castle (mazourka), Ballure Glen (waltz), Castle Rushen (Virginia reel), Tynwald (schottische), Peel Fishermen (lancers), Mona’s Pride (waltz), Hunt the Wren (polka), Glenmaye (quadrille), Lovely Mona (schottische), Ellan-my-chree (mazourka), Manx Fairy (Virginia reel). The dancing came to a prompt end at 5pm with a prize waltz. The prize-giving for the day’s events had to be curtailed “through the party had to make a stampede to catch the 6 o’clock train for Oakland.” Sailing back the band once again played “Ellan Vannin” and “Lovely Mona,” along with “Mylecharane,” and “the last notes of the tune were only drowned in the noise of San Francisco.” Here we see in the naming of the dances the recreation of a sense of Manxness in the heat of a Californian summer’s day, and, as ever, the centrality of “Mylecharane” to that identity, described as the “Isle of Man National Air.”

STEPHEN MILLER, 2019

REFERENCES

Taubman, James T. “[Letter to the Editor] Manxmen in California.” *Manx Sun* 21 July 1877: [2]f.

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¹ James T. Taubman, “[Letter to the Editor] Manxmen in California,” *Manx Sun* 21 July 1877.