

Manx Notes 361 (2019)

“FIRST OF WHITE BOOK TOM KERMODE” *

There is still considerable work to be done on the four tune books that make up the Dr John Clague Collection now deposited in the MNHL (MS 448/1-3 A and MS 449 B) as regards their composition and what that can tell us of the pattern and nature of Clague’s own collecting. He was a poor annotator of the tunes, especially as compared to W.H. Gill, who was precise with the details of the recording sessions of the singers as found by the brothers. As regards Thomas Kermode of Bradda, we know when Clague came across him as it is mentioned in a letter to Deemster J.F. Gill written on 25 December 1895, “I have discovered a new ‘mine’ at Bradda. | An old blind man—Tom Kermode by name, has given me three splendid old songs, and I think I shall be able to get three more yet.”¹ The same letter mentions another singer, Charles Faragher: “I have had three from old Fargher who gave me ‘Shannon Rea,’ and he has another which I shall probably get this week.” Finally, he mentions that “[a]ltogether I have eight or nine ‘new’ songs since the ‘Girls of Balladoole.’” With these tunes, dateable as regards their collecting, an approach can be made to the tune books, seeing just where they to be found transcribed amongst the Clague Collection. In the case of the tunes gathered from Kermode, an annotation made by Clague on one of the pages in MS 448/1 A shows them to have been transcribed from a specific notebook now missing, one presumably with a white cover.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2019



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¹ Letter from Dr John Clague to Deemster J.F. Gill, 25 December 1895, MNHL, MS 09702, Box 2.