

Manx Notes 401 (2019)

“BESOMS, BESOMS, FINE AND NEW” *

BESOMS AND BESOM-MAKERS

The floors were swept with the besom. This was made of bent which was pulled, then plaited, and a stick about three feet long with holes bored through with a gimlet, about three or four holes. The bent was tied to the stick and a wooden peg put through it to keep the bent from slipping off. The Lhane was a noted place for “besom makers” as they were called as a good stock of bent was easily obtained on the Ayres. When a good stock of besoms was made, the men went round with bundles on their backs selling them, and they sang a song which went like this:

Besoms, besoms, fine and new,
Besoms in the kitchen,
Besoms in the hall,
Besoms in the parlour
Among the ladies all.

This was the way they advertised their goods as they went from house-to-house.

Notebook by John Kneen (1949), MNHL, MANX MUSEUM FLS JK B(16).

The collecting of the Gill brothers, Dr John Clague, and A.W. Moore did not feature occupational songs, such as the one recorded here by John Kneen (1860–1958), the blacksmith at Jurby East and later at the Lhen in Andreas. With the passing of this trade comes too the end of the need for songs to advertise those wares.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2019



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