

# Manx Notes 403 (2019)

“IT WAS MOST INTERESTING WATCHING HIM & THEM”  
LUCINDA GILL AND THE GILL BROTHERS \*

Beachview. Castletown  
I of Man. 15 Aug

Dear Mr Cubbon,

My daughter and I have come over to above address as usual for some weeks—so please send us notices of the next excursion of the Society (Natural Hist: & Antiq.) here. as my house in Killiney is let.

I had expected to find Mr Ralfe in Castletown & to pay him the annual Subs as usual—But I can pay it to you when we meet.

[*interlined* Mrs W H Gill was much pleased]

That was a nice notice you—I think it was—put in about my dear Brother in law. Mr W.H. Gill.

But you made a mistake in it. Mr Gill was Senior to the Deemster [Gill by] // nearly 3 years. The latter being born in February 1842 & Mr W H G in Oct 1839 Deemster Gill was only 57 at the time of his death in 1899. Also they did not come together to the Isle. The Deemster Gill came at the age of 11 in 1853.

In the speech at King Williams there was also a mistake—Mr Tom Brown was not connected in any way with the Deemster’s Dr Clague’s collection of [*inserted at end of line* folk] music. Dr Clague first made his collection from about Castletown & the South. The Deemster then collected all the names of possible singers in Peel. Douglas. Centre & North of Isle. I was with him on 2 or 3 of his expeditions hunting them up. It was his idea to get the airs published by Boosey like the Scotch & English folk music. & he got over his brother who took down the music from the selected singers. It was most interesting watching him & them. & then Mr W H Gill harmonized it arranged it & got words written to it. Mr Brown strange to say did not approve of the words & harmony //

[*written along the left-hand edge of the first page* He preferred Mr Arthur Moore’s method of reproducing the airs—a way which would never have caught on the public.]

[*continued written downwards in the gap between the address line and the salutation* The 3 Manx concerts were entirely the Deemsters idea most ably helped by Mr Harry Wood who gave enthusiastic help—& wrote the Manx Lancers—which the Deemster and we thought a Capital way of Deceminating [*sic*] the airs: but Mr W H Gill thought it sacrilege. I brought him to the Palace to hear them.

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\* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “It was most interesting watching him & them.” Lucinda Gill and the Gill brothers,” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* October (2019), [11]. Reproduced here with sources.

Yrs very truly | LB Gill ]

Letter from Lucinda Brooke Gill to William Cubbon, 15 August [1923],  
MNHL, MS 401 C.

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This letter was a chance find in the MNHL and it is due to Sarah Christian of the Ballaugh Heritage Trust that it has come to light and I am grateful to her for bringing it to my attention. It was written by Lucinda Brooke Gill *née* Symes, Deemster J.F. Gill's second wife, who married him in 1892;<sup>1</sup> this marriage was short lived as the Deemster died in 1899. The Deemster's first marriage was to Eliza Agnew Mitchell in 1872,<sup>2</sup> and ended on her death in 1889.<sup>3</sup> As can be seen in this letter Lucinda Gill was still at this date keeping up her connection with the Island, not just visiting but also as a member of the Isle of Man Antiquarian and Natural History Society. Whilst undated, the year is 1923, the year in which W.H. Gill died, "my dear Brother in law" as she put it. What is to note in this letter is not just the detail given about the folk song collecting activities of the Gill brothers, but also her own involvement in that endeavour. As she wrote about the quest to find singers, "The Deemster then collected all the names of possible singers in Peel. Douglas. Centre & North of Isle. I was with him on 2 or 3 of his expeditions hunting them up." And she was also there with the brothers when they were collecting in the field, "he [*ie*, the Deemster] got over his brother who took down the music from the selected singers. It was most interesting watching him & them." Due to this letter we can now add the name of Lucinda Gill to the roll call of those involved in the collecting of Manx vernacular culture in this period.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2019

#### REFERENCES

- Anon. "[Births, Marriages, and Deaths] Marriages." *Mona's Herald* 14 August 1872: 5b.  
 ———. "[Births, Marriages, Deaths] Marriages." *Manx Sun* 26 November 1892: 8f.  
 ———. "[Local News] The Late Mrs Gill." *Manx Sun* 23 November 1889: 4f.  
 ———. "Marriage of Deemster Gill." *Mona's Herald* 30 November 1892: 3f.




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<sup>1</sup> Anon, "[Births, Marriages, Deaths] Marriages," *Manx Sun* 26 November 1892. See too, Anon, "Marriage of Deemster Gill," *Mona's Herald* 30 November 1892.  
<sup>2</sup> Anon, "[Births, Marriages, and Deaths] Marriages," *Mona's Herald* 14 August 1872.  
<sup>3</sup> Anon, "[Local News] The Late Mrs Gill," *Manx Sun* 23 November 1889.