

Manx Notes 548 (2021)

ARRANE NY FERRISHYN “SONG OF THE [TRAVELLING] FAIRIES” *

(1)

MANX READINGS (19 FEBRUARY 1872)

ARRANE NY FERESHYN

This was a song of the Fairies, told of a Manxman, who being jolly got into the hands of the jolly fairies who took him all over the Island, popping him into rich larders and well-stored cellars, where he ate and drank his fill. The song also describes the rare scenes which were dropped upon on the excursion, the audience bursting out into roars of laughter at those points where a Manx maiden and her swain were bowled out “coorting.”

“Manx Readings and Concert,” *Mona’s Herald*, 21 February 1872, 5d–f & 6.

ORDER YN LHIAGH GAELKAGH

The following programme was then gone through with such *éclat* as at times to bring the house down in unbounded applause:

ORDER YN LHIAGH GAELKAGH, EC DOOLISH

Vr Harry Callister, Skeerey Pherick ... Arrane ne Feresihyn (song of the fairies).

“The Manx Entertainment,” *Manx Sun*, 24 February 1872, 4e.

A. W. MOORE, LETTER TO THE MONA’S HERALD (1894)

DEAR SIR,—On the 19th of February, 1872, a Manx Readings and Concert took place in Douglas. At this entertainment, which was reported in the Herald of the 21st of February, a number of Manx songs were sung, and among them, one entitled “Arrane ny Fereshyn.” The words of this song are not given, but there is the following brief account of it: “This was a song of the fairies, told of a Manxman, who being jolly got into the hands of the jolly fairies who took him all over the Island, popping him into rich larders and well stored cellars, where he ate and drank his fill. The song also describes the rare scenes which were dropped upon on the excursion, the audience bursting out into roars of laughter at those points where a Manx maiden and her swain were bowled out ‘coorting.’” My object in writing to you and making this quotation from your issue of nearly 22 years ago is to get the words, and,

* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “Arrane ny Ferrishyn. ‘Song of the [Travelling] Fairies’ (1),” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* May (2021), [14]–[15].

if possible, the music of this song from any of your readers who may remember them. I should also be glad to know if Messrs Quine Brothers “whose quadrille band gave their services, and played a series of Manx airs and dance music between each reading and song” are still living.

Yours truly, | A.W. MOORE.

Woodbourne House, | Jan. 5, 1894.

A.W. Moore, “[Letter to the Editor] Arrane ny Fereshyn,” *Mona’s Herald*, 10 January 1894, 6f.

A.G. GILCHRIST TO MONA DOUGLAS (1923) & (1925)

I do hope you will recover the fairy song—as it sounds so very old and interesting. Even if you don’t, I should be glad to have the scrap of chorus, and will describe the method of performance, which in itself is worth noting!

Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to Mona Douglas (21 November 1923)

I suppose you never obtained that song of the travelling fairies!

Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to Mona Douglas (24 March 1925)

I am sorry you could not get the “Travelling Fairies,” but it is one of the difficulties with folk-singers that if they don’t want to sing, “wild horses” won’t drag anything out of them!

Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to Mona Douglas (26 May 1925)

I suppose you never did get the fairy travellers’ song [...].

Letter from A.G. Gilchrist to Mona Douglas (4 August 1925)

Letters from A.G. Gilchrist to Mona Douglas, MNHL, MS 09545, Mona Douglas Papers, Box 21.

A.G. GILCHRIST (1928)

[*Appendix i, B, Arrane y Glashtin*] Miss Douglas writes that the list of places visited by the Glashtin reminds her of a similar list in a song of “The Travelling Fairies” which she has for some time been endeavouring to obtain from its singer, who could not be persuaded to sing it for her but gave her the “plan” of the song. It mentioned several of the places given in the “Additional Texts” verse, but in this Peel song occur also Ballacashtal (Castletown), Cleigh-yn-arragh, Sloc, Glion Meay, and Lag Eeval ec Gordon, instead of simply Gordon. In the last verse—so the singer told her—“when they [the fairies] reached Gordon there they stayed over the full moon with great feasting and merriment.” Gordon, adds Miss Douglas, seems to have been a favourite

place with fairies. It comes into several stories, and Lag Eeval—a place she knows well—still bears the reputation of being very “gentle.” This fairy song had a refrain of the “Ri fol” type, in which the company joined, and there was a little step-dance by the soloist between the verses, to which the company kept time by clapping their hands. This seems to me to be a different song, but the “travelling” tradition is interesting.—A.G.G.

“Arrane y Glashtin: Va Oie ayns Cronk Ollee Mooar,” in A.G. Gilchrist, “Songs from the Isle of Man (Part i),” *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* vii.28 (1924), v–xvi & 99–198, see 105–06. Also, see “Arrane y Glashtin,” 203–05, in “Additional Texts and Fragments belonging to Tunes in Journal No. 28 (Manx Collection, Part i),” in “Songs from the Isle of Man (Part ii),” *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* vii.29 (1925), v–xi & 203–76.

[MONA DOUGLAS] (1930)

Song of the Travelling Fairies.—I should be glad to obtain the complete words of this song, and the tune of the verse-part. I have been given the air of the refrain and told that the song, which was well known in Peel some years ago, describes the travels of the fairies from one place in the Island to another, and their doings in each place.

Anon [but Mona Douglas], “[Manx Notes and Queries] [Queries] Song of the Travelling Fairies,” *Mona’s Herald*, 14 May 1930, 3f.

Song of the Travelling Fairies.—Words and air of the verses of this song wanted. It is said to have been well known in Peel some years ago.

Anon [but Mona Douglas], “[Manx Notes and Queries] [Queries] Song of the Travelling Fairies,” *Mona’s Herald*, 25 June 1930, 7e.

Song of the Travelling Fairies.—Complete words of this song and air of the verse-part wanted. The song is said to have been well known in Peel some years ago, and describes the travels of the fairies through the Island and the places where they rested.

Anon [but Mona Douglas], “[Manx Notes and Queries] [Queries] Song of the Travelling Fairies,” *Mona’s Herald*, 19 November 1930, 6e.

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STEPHEN MILLER RBV

