

Manx Notes 565 (2021)

RUTH HERBERT LEWIS (1871–1946) *



Ruth Herbert Lewis c.1910, at the outset of her collecting career

The name of Ruth Herbert Lewis will be unfamiliar here though she does figure as the author of a paper delivered at the Fourth Celtic Congress held in Douglas in July 1921. She was not present and it was read in her absence. By this date she was a well-known collector of Welsh folk songs, and ones in Welsh itself, a language she had learnt. She was also a pioneer of using the phonograph. If she would have been in the Island, then it would have been a homecoming of sorts, as she was the granddaughter of Hugh Stowell Brown (1823–86), the well-known minister of Myrtle Street Chapel in Liverpool, and he in his turn was the elder brother of T.E. Brown. For the 1921 paper, Ruth Herbert Lewis, “Welsh and Manx Folk Songs,” *Transactions of the Celtic Congress, 1921*, ed. D. Rhys Phillips (Swansea, 1923) 165–67. For further on Lewis, see E. Wyn James, “An ‘English’ lady among the Welsh folk: Ruth Herbert Lewis and the Welsh Folk-Song Society,” *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation*, eds. Ian Russell and David Atkinson (Aberdeen: The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2004) 266–83; David R. Jones, “Lady Ruth Herbert Lewis (1871–1946): Indefatigable Collector of Flintshire’s Folk-Songs,” *Flintshire Historical Society Journal* 37 (2007), 106–67.

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