

# Manx Notes 568 (2021)

“MR CORRAN WAS NOT MUCH OF A MUSICAL GENIUS”

T.E. BROWN RECALLS JAMES CORRAN,  
THE PARISH CLERK OF BRADDAN \*

[3c] Our clerk, Jemmy Corran, was a very remarkable man. Observe, I call him Jemmy Corran, because the rude, modern age to which we belong has come to talk of people in that way; but my father would never have tolerated such a liberty; to him he was “Corran,” or “Corran the clerk,” and so he was to us. A merry, mercurial, bright, laughing man—he was of the Corrans of Ballamenagh, one of the best old Braddan families; and, after the fashion of that time had been brought up to a trade—it was that of a ship carpenter. The clerkship was, as you know, elective—I suppose it is so still. Jemmy was brought in at the head of the poll by the ship carpenters of Douglas. I remember I used always to fancy that they had all come up to Braddan in a solid phalanx, armed with adzes and hatchets. Mr Corran was not much of a musical genius; his leading of the singing was—terrible. (Loud and continued laughter.) On Manx Sundays he had it all to himself, as the organ was not played. His tunes were the most indescribable mazes and labyrinths of impossible melody. Some people thought that they were grand old Manx airs; there was a wild melancholy about them that might have suggested this theory; but no! [3d] they were only tunes too sadly familiar, but led utterly astray in the wilderness of Corran’s incapacity; but on English Sundays we had quite a choir.

“Meeting of Manxmen in Liverpool.” *Mona’s Herald* 19 January 1881: 2d–f & 3.

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T.E. Brown (1830–97) was born in Douglas and when he was two, the family moved to Kirk Braddan, his father, the Rev. Robert Brown, being appointed then to the living of Kirk Braddan. In the 1841 census, James Corran was aged 40 and working as a joiner. Married to Alice, they lived at Cronkbourne with their seven children, the eldest three of whom were born in England. By the time of the next census, Corran was now the Parish Clerk, and living at Church Bridge House; he died early in 1853, and the clerkship became available once more. Kirk Braddan at this date was still holding the Sunday Service in both English and Manx. The music practices were different as Brown recalls—on “English Sundays” as Brown termed it, there was a

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choir and an organ accompaniment, “Manx Sundays,” the hymns were lined out as once was common practice by the parish clerk.

STEPHEN MILLER RBV

See, *Census Enumerators’ Book* for Braddan 1841, HO/107 1463/5, fol. 29; *CEB* for Braddan 1851, HO/107 2525, fol. 434, sch. 85. For his death, “Election of Parish Clerk,” *Mona’s Herald*, 30 March 1853, 3c–d.





STEPHEN MILLER RBV

REFERENCES