

Manx Notes 570 (2021)

“ON THE FORMER OCCASION THERE WAS AN ENTIRE
ABSENCE OF MANX SINGING”

THE AGNEASH OIEL VERREY (1902) *

It would appear that the good people of Agneash are determined (at least so far as they are concerned) that the old-fashioned Oiel Verrey services will not altogether die out. At one of these services, held about three weeks ago in the chapel, the attendance was so large that many persons had to remain outside. On Saturday evening last another of these services was held, when the chapel was again filled. This last time the service was in accordance with ancient custom, there being no programme provided. The Chairman (Mr W. Kermeen), who was the right man in the right place, briefly alluded to old customs. Referring to the Manx tongue, he said: “Strange though it may be to many present, it was the medium of courtship in his early days.” He was pleased to say that they (in Agneash) were still able to give some capital specimens of the good old tongue, which was richer and fuller than the ordinary language of to-day. Mr Kermeen recited some verses from [a] ballad on the wreck of the Lily on Kitterland, the whole of which he had learned when a boy. The meeting was then thrown open. The chapel and also the male choir were again in attendance. A choir from Maughold also put in an appearance, and all three presented some fine old tunes in good style and were highly appreciated, especially by the old folks. Several recitations were given both in Manx and English by persons varying in age from 8 years to almost 80. Quite a number of carols were sung. On the former occasion there was an entire absence of Manx singing. It cannot, however, be said, so far as Maughold and Lonan are concerned, that Manx carol singers have altogether ceased to exist. The old veteran, Mr James Kewley, though far advanced in years, is still hale and hearty and possesses an excellent voice for one of his years. His two carols were highly appreciated. Mr John Moore, the well-known singer of Maughold, was also equal to the occasion with a portion of “Carval Drogh Vraane,” which was well received. Excellent order prevailed throughout.

“[Lonan and Laxey] Agneash Oiel Verrey.” *Manx Sun* 25 January 1902: 5g.

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What was “old-fashioned” about this Oiel Verrey was the use of Manx and associated with that the singing of *carvals*; the influence of the Manx Language Revival here is

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clear. Much, however, about the Oiel Verrey has changed: not just the date, but also it taking place in a Methodist chapel, the presence now of a choir as well as a guest one here from Maughold. Nevertheless, what remained was community and seasonal celebration.

STEPHEN MILLER RBV

NAMES

William Kermeen, was aged 58, a lead miner, married to Margaret (57), and living at Agneash in Lonan, with their children, Emily Margaret (27), James (19) lead miner, Elizabeth (17), Alfred (13). William was born in Rushen, the others all in Lonan. He was the only Manx speaker in the household.

Census Enumerators' Book for Lonan 1901, RG 13/5307, fol. 22, sch. 11.

James Kewley, 68 years old, lead miner, lived at Agneash with Ellen his wife (63) and nephew, Thomas (15), another lead miner. James and Thomas were born in Lonan, Ellen was English. James spoke Manx.

Census Enumerators' Book for Lonan 1901, RG 13/5307, fol. 24, sch. 37.

John Moore, aged 54, lived at Ballaberna, working the farm there with his mother, Isabella (72), his brother, James (35), and his nephew, Charles (14). Another nephew, Robert (8), was also living there. All were born in Maughold. Only Isabella is returned as a Manx speaker.

Census Enumerators' Book for Maughold 1901, RG 13/5302, fol. 17, sch. 43.

