Manx Notes 91 (2007)

"MY SHORT VISIT TO THE ISLE OF MAN 44 YEARS AGO" HENRY JENNER TO ARCHDEACON KEWLEY (1919)

(1)

13 Aug. 1919.

Dear Sir,

Your letter has interested me very much, and has brought back to me very pleasant memories of my short visit to the Isle of Man 44 years ago. The visit was a very interesting one, and the Manx clergy generally were very kind to me. I had prepared the way for it by asking a number of questions by letter, to which I got very excellent answers, for al the clergy seemed interested in the subject.

Now that you mention it, I remember that Mr Qualtrough left Kirk Arbory soon after I was there, but I thought he had told me that he meant to have a Manx service at Kirk Bride. He had a very fair congregation on the Sunday that I was at Kirk Andreas, but I noticed that most of them were talking English together in the churchyard afterwards.

The vicar of Kirk Maughold, Mr Kermode, was another of those from whom I got a good deal of information. I don't think that he really spoke Manx, but he was a man of considerable culture and intelligence. and knew A great deal about the language. I think Mr Qualtrough must have begun life as a Manx speaker. Mr Airey of Kirk Michael also told me a good deal and I had a long talk with Mr Drury one morning.

It would be very interesting to collect the Manx words still in use and to compare them with Celtic words which survive in Cornwall. The difficulty that you mention occurs here also. Though the working classes still use a fair number of Cornish words amongst themselves, they used to be, and some extent still are rather ashamed of them when they talk to educated people. But a good many of them are beginning now to see that the old words are interesting. On June 24th last a play in the Cornish dialect of English was acted at Penzance. It was written by one of the St Ives artists, who had been collecting surviving Cornish words for some time, and as the period of the play, costumes &c. were 18th century, he introduced as much Celtic as the English would hold without being unintelligible, though it all consisted of words which he had actually heard used. There were present a few elderly people of the humble origin who were delighted to hear the half-forgotten speech of their younger days. Between the acts two songs were sung in real Cornish by a village schoolmistress of this neighbourhood, dressed in Cornish fish wife costume to represent the celebrated Dolly Pentreath, and at the end the National Anthem was sung in real Cornish. Of course these were 20th century translations (made by me) but the audience were all delighted with them. Though as a spoken language

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Cornish, except for place-names, is gone beyond recall, there is certainly a good deal of interest in it here.

Manx place-names would be another study of some interest. Here a very large proportion of place-names, perhaps 90 per cent, are Cornish, and it must probably be the same with you. The field names in the Tithe Apportionments Returns of circ. 1836 are very interesting. I do not know whether you have such things in the Isle of Man. Having such complete Home Rule, I suppose that the Title Commutation did not apply to you. But if you have anything that answers to the English Returns, a good deal might be got out of them. Here we find field-names purely Cornish, purely English and mixed Cornish and English, and sometimes English arranged Cornish fashion with the epithet coming after the noun.

In my pamphlet on Manx I had something to say about a very intelligent fisherman called Thomas Kenvig with whom I had a good deal of talk. Among other things he gave me a charming bit of popular etymology. He was telling me about the "Oie'l Voirey" carol-singing and was trying to explaining the meaning of the words. I asked "what is Voirey?" And his answer was "It is a woman's name, and I will tell you it will mean. It is Moir-Gee, Mother of God." I don't think he knew the English form of the name, but he was evidently all right on the [ ] question, for he went on "Yes, that is what she was."

It would be interesting to know how far a Manx speaker could make out Scottish Gaelic, I think old Ashbourne's Gaelic is very literary and purist and not quite a fair test. I have heard him speak Irish and Welsh very fluently, but his own language is English, and it might be easier for a Manxman to follow a real native Irish speaker. John Campbell of Islay (author of Popular Tales of the West Highlands") visited the Isle of Man in 1860 and came to the conclusion that a Scottish Highlander "could speak Manks as soon as he could acquire the art of mispronouncing his own language to the right amount," but he does not seem to have had much success in making himself understood. My experience in the Highlands is that Gaelic speakers there are very stupid about understanding Gaelic that isnt pronounced exactly right. They certainly find Irish Gaelic very difficult to follow, and can seldom make out much of it, though on paper the two dialects are very close together.

When I had made up my account of the Manx language into a pamphlet, I gave the materials for it, the original answers of the Manx clergy and a number of letters from them, to the British Museum, where they now are, as Add.MS. 29,894, in the MS Department. If you are in London, it might interest you to see them some time. I think there are some good letters from Mr Qualtrough, with perhaps some details that do not come into the pamphlet, which was necessarily compressed.

I am sending you a copy of the pamphlet, and also one about "Traditional Relics of Cornish." They are both rather juvenile productions and I could probably have done them better later on. Also I send a few specimens of modern Cornish verse, done as Christmas greetings some years ago.

I remember a clergyman of your name, who was, I think, a Manxman, who was Vicar of Wingham in Kent (the next parish to my father's old parish of Preston) some years ago. His wife was a distant cousin of my mother's, and was one of the family of Dean Ovenden, of St Patrick, Dublin—I forget what relation to him. I wonder whether he was a relation of yours. I do not know whether he is still at Wingham.

There is a Manxman who has some knowledge of Manx living about six miles from here, Canon F.J. Mad⌜drell⌝, Vicar of Gulval, near Penzance. I dare say you know him. he was at King William's College, and I think he got the Kelly Manx Prize. he was at the Cornish play at Penzance and we had some talk about Manx.

Your faithfully | Henry Jenner.

I wonder whether you are likely to be able to go to the Celtic congress at Edinburgh, 4 October. The Isle of Man ought to be represented there—it was not at Neath last year, though it was very well represented at Edinburgh ⌜in 1907⌝ by the late Speaker Moore (a delightful man) and a number of Manx singers, who sang "Mylacharine," "Ny Kirree 'fo Sniaghtey" and other songs. If you would like to know about the Congress I could get you information.

(2)

29 Aug. 1919.

Dear Sir,

Your letter is very interesting, especially the note of the field called "Oalan" in your parish. Kelly's etymology of the word is, I think, wrong. The Irish and Scottish Gaelic form is Abhlan, which I think is from Oblahonem, most derivatives from Latin whether in Celtic or roman language being from the accusative of the Latin word. there is a Welsh word afrilladem, plural afrllad, of which the first part afr seems to come from the root offer. Apparently the Celts derived their words for the Mass (Welsh, Cornish & Breton, offeren, Scottish & irish Gaelic aifrionn, aifreann, Manx erin. In Scot.Gaelic the f is not sounded, so it comes very close to the Manx) and for the Altar-bread, whether before or after consecration, from some derivatives of offero. They did not adopt the Latin missa for the service, though they used it in quite early times when they wrote in Latin, nor do they seem (except the modern Breton) to have formed any word from hostia, which is used in the Roman Rite & its derivatives (e.g. the Sarum) for the Altar-bread, whether consecrated or not. I never hear of another instance of the elements for consecration not being, theoretically, the offerings of the faithful.

The rubric in the Church of England Prayer-book saying that they are to be provided "at the charges of the parish" seems to represent primitive and pre-

Reformation usage, and to this day in the Ambrosian Rite in Milan Cathedral the old men and the old women, belonging to the "Scuola di S.Ambrogio," bring in the bread & wine at the Offertory, evidently as representatives of the Congregation. [see my article on The ambrosian Rite in "The Catholic Encyclopedia"]. But in practice nowadays, I think, in most places, whether Anglican or Roman, the elements are provided by the priest, and at most come into general Church expenses, without any definite offerings being specially "ear-marked" for the purpose. I think probably in the early days of more frequent celebrations in the Ch. of England there would have been expected to pay for the extra bread & wine, and I never heard of that objection being raised. since the abolition of church-rates in 1868 there would have been no funds, except occasional collections for church expenses. I think I have heard of parishes where the parishioners took it in turn to provide the elements, but in old Churchwardens' Accounts one often sees entries of money paid for the bread & wine. I was looking not long ago at some 18th century accounts of Madron (the parish in which Penzance is), and there these items came times a year, the usual three festivals, and one Sunday in November, the last being accounted for by a curious entry in, I think, 1751, "There was no Sacrament in November this year because the Mayor of Penzance qualified [i.e. under the Test Act] of Buryan [a neighbouring parish]." The idea of a special field being set apart for the Eucharistic bread is a rather pleasing one. There is a pretty little poem by Chatterston Dix, a now rather forgotten poet of the earlier "Ritualists," called "Dream of Harvest-time" in which he imagines an Angel coming down into a harvest field and choosing sheaves for various purposes. One verse is:

"He chose one little sheaf, and said,
O Food for man's salvation,
No sweeter sheaf the winds have kissed,
Elect of God for Eucharist,
Thou shalt become the Living Bread,
For mortals' adoration."

It is very much the same idea.

As regards Mr Qualtrough's statistics of Manx speakers in his parish, I do not remember how he expressed it, whether, as some, I think, did, by a vague proportion, or by definite numbers. It certainly seems a large proportion. I found in many cases that the standard of Manx-speaking was affected by whether the writer was or was not an enthusiastic Manxman. If he was, as Qualtrough certainly was, he would himself speak Manx as much as possible, and would probably count all who could speak ˈɪtˈ at all as Manx-speakers. I see that he only found 12 who could speak no English, which is a much more definite question to answer. It seems odd that your predecessor at Andreas should say that there were 50 who could speak no English, and yet that Manx was not necessary in his parish work! I don't remember anything about him, though I went to his house, as I record having to ask the way in

Manx. Probably he could not speak Manx himself. some day I must look out some very long & detailed letters which I wrote to my wife (only she wasnt my wife then) from the Isle of Man. We have kept them carefully, and they would be interesting now. I was only about a week there, but it was a very full week, and I have never been there since. I though I was right in saying that Mr Qualtrough was going to have Manx services at Kirk Bride. So 1879 must have been the last I suppose.

I remember Mr Kermode's children. I stopped at his house one night. one of his daughters, a rather pretty girl of almost 20, was something of a musician, and rather enthusiastic about Manx music. She sang "Mylacharaine" [sic] for my benefit, and afterwards sent me a copy of the words & music, and I remember writing to thank her in Manx. I wonder whether that was "Cushag." I could not write Manx now, for I have forgotten it a good deal.

Many thanks for the copy of the Manx service. It was really an interesting incident.

Yours sincerely, | Henry Jenner.

Source: (1) Letter from Henry Jenner to Archdeacon Kewley, 13 August 1919, Manx National Heritage Library, MS 871/[1] a; (2) Letter from Henry Jenner to Archdeacon Kewley, 29 August 1919, Manx National Heritage Library, MS 871/[2] a.

Henry Jenner (1848–1934) was the chief architect of the Cornish Revival[1] who had made a visit to Man in 1875 in order to ascertain the linguistic position of Manx.[2] He had prepared for his visit by circulating a questionnaire to the Island's clergy in 1874. Jenner worked in the Department of Manuscripts at the British Museum and after completing his article he mentions that

> I gave the materials for it, the original answers of the Manx clergy and a number of letters from them, to the British Museum, where they now are, as Add.MS. 29,894,

[1] For a biographical sketch see J.H. Rowe and R.M. Nance, "Henry Jenner, M.A., F.S.A.," *Annual Report of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society* 101 (1935 [for 1934]). See also R. Morton Nance, "'Gwas Myghal' and the Cornish Revival," *Old Cornwall* ii.8 (1934). Gwaz Myghal was Jenner's bardic name chosen when he became a member of the Breton Gorseth in 1903. Henry Jenner, *A Handbook of the Cornish Language* (London: David Nutt, 1904) is his best known work. The same year the Pan-Celtic Congress at Caernarfon recognised Conrwall as one of the six Celtic Nations due to his efforts, his best known contribution. With the founding of the Cornish Gorseth in 1928 Jenner became its first Grand Bard.

[2] Henry Jenner, "The Manx Language: Its Grammar, Literature, and Present State," *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1875–76 (1877).

> in the MS Department. If you are in London, it might interest you to see them some time.

He went on, "I think there are some good letters from Mr Qualtrough, with perhaps some details that do not come into the pamphlet, which was necessarily compressed." Material relating to folklore and folk song, for instance, did not make it into print at the time although it has subsequently appeared.[3] As Jenner indicates in his letter, there is extra material available for study, namely the letters from the clergy to Jenner himself. It is hoped that the material at BL Add MS 29894 will be made available and edited together with the letters presented here and the text of Jenner's published piece. Hopefully, the letters from Jenner to his wife written while on the Island can be located.

STEPHEN MILLER
VIENNA, 2007

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[3] Stephen Miller, "'Molly Charane is the only Manx Song much known': Henry Jenner's Survey (1874–75)," *Manx Notes* 28 (2004).