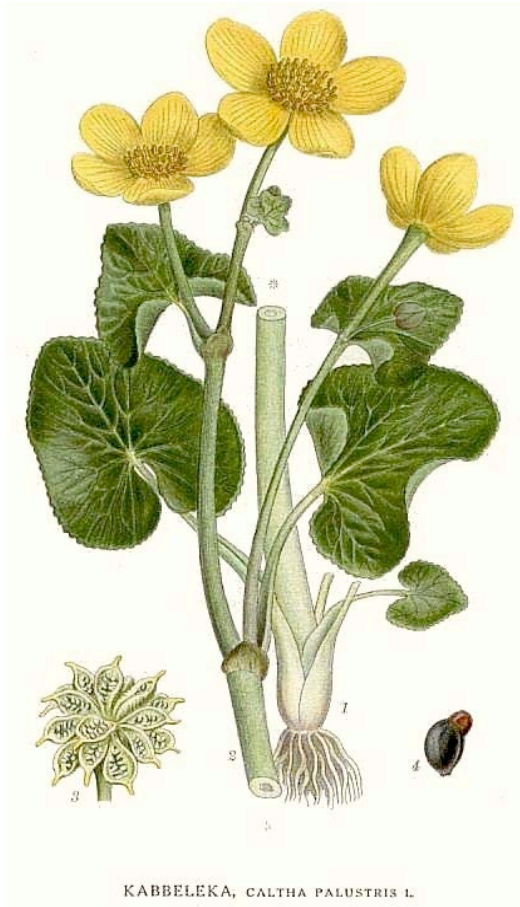


STEPHEN MILLER

LAA BOALDYN

MAY DAY FOLKLORE
FROM THE ISLE OF MAN



CHIOLLAGH BOOKS
FOR
CULTURE VANNIN
2018

“ASUNNING BEFORE MAY-DAY”



The Chapter Quest of Rushen met on 27 October 1723 to draw up its presentments for the parish and one of the charges reads so:

John Keggeen, upon complaint of Elizabeth Maddrel, presents Jony Cain for saying that the s[*a*]d Maddrell's and Balla-How's families, w[*h*]ch the Boat's Crew were the Devil's, & for praying to God that she might see the Hides of their Cattle asunning before May-Day.

MNHL, *Book of Prestments* for Rushen (1723)

Strife between neighbours often escalated to the stage where they appeared before the Chapter Quest, often on account of the language that was used when disputes flared up. The name of the Devil as that of God was invoked here as well as, interestingly, mention of May Day. *Laa Boaldyn*, May Day, saw the turning of the calendar, winter giving way to summer, a liminal time which saw a moment of danger where supernatural forces were at their strongest. Protection had to be sought against the power of witches and the fairy folk, the thresholds of the household and cowhouse safeguarded with the *crosh cuirn* and the spreading of May flowers, namely the marsh marigold. On May Day Eve, fires were kindled on hilltops, its smoke serving as a prophylactic. May Day itself, too, was a time of anxiety, when people gathering the dew from ones own crops could use it to transfer the future benefit of the harvest to their own. You had also to be on one own's guard, as was John Corjeage presented in June 1794,

concerning whom it has been reported, that on May morning last past, he had laid hold of a woman in this parish, who declared to him, that if he would not let her go, she would bewitch him,—and that upon his suggesting to her, That it was not in her powers, she replied and confessed, it was not in her power, knowing him to have in his pocket A Cross made of Round Tree.—

MNHL, *Book of Prestments* for Michael (1794)

The *crosh cuirn* was carried here on the person, as a countermeasure against malicious magic. One can see here the anxiety as to the well-being not just of the family but also its livestock and crops, in a period when a poor harvest spelt hardship, and with a failure of the herring fishery, starvation.

*

Gathered together here is material relating to May Day folklore in the Isle of Man drawn from print, manuscript, and official records. Printed references always pose a challenge in discerning what is original and what is copied without acknowledgment from other sources. When *verbatim*, it is easy to spot, but when paraphrased, it is

often difficult to see if it is a copy, or simply a somewhat similar account. With the publication in 1891 of A.W. Moore's *The Folk-lore of the Isle of Man*, a ready source was now to hand, one which was been drawn on thereafter. Moore himself, it must be said, was also content to draw on earlier accounts, and so this material was recycled by others when making use of his work. As a result, references after 1891 have been filtered in order to cut down on needless repetition of essentially the same account. Whilst some original material, likely only in passing, will have been omitted as a result, nothing substantive is lost.

This compilation is split into five sections: (1) references drawn from print, (2) newspaper accounts, (3) manuscript mentions, (4) cases drawn from the *Book of Presentments* (the record of the Chapter Quest), (5) proceedings of the Consistory Court (recorded in *Liber Causarum*). This is followed by an Appendix with (i) the full text of William Kennish's poem, "Old May Eve," from 1844, its length precluding its appearance in the first section, (ii) entries from the Rev. John Kelly's dictionary, which whilst published in 1866, was compiled during his lifetime (1750–1809) detailing his etymological obsession with *Baal*, taken by him to be the Sun God, whose worship ultimately lies behind the folklore of May Day. The similar but varied speculations of Rhys and Moore must equally be read in the light of the knowledge and approaches of the time. For a recent view on this topic, see Ronald Hutton, "Beltane," 218–25, in *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 1996).

STEPHEN MILLER, 2018



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—— Jurby, 1742

—— Michael, 1794

LIBER CAUSARUM

Liber Causarum for 1715

——, 1738

——, 1741



LAA BOALDYN

“BURNING THE BUITCH”



Charlie Caine pictured 'burning the buitch', a ceremony he carried out on May Day Eve almost every year until his death in 2007. He only missed one year, and had a bad tractor accident which he attributed to his failure to carry out the ceremony. Charlie really believed that this ritual would rid the farm of witches. His father had always done it, and older Cronk y Voddy people like Donald Cannan remember many other farmers doing it as well.

Charlie Caine pictured “burning the buitch” [*ie*, witch], a ceremony he carried out on May Day Eve almost every year until his death in 2007. He only missed one year, and had a bad tractor accident which he attributed to his failure to carry out the ceremony. Charlie really believed that this ritual would rid the farm of witches. His father had always done it, and older Cronk y Voddy people like Donald Cannan remember many other farmers doing it as well.

LAA BOALDYN
MAY DAY FOLKLORE
FROM THE ISLE OF MAN

*

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[P1] GEORGE WALDRON, *THE HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE ISLE OF MAN* (1744) *

[95] In almost all the great Parishes they chuse from among the Daughters of the most wealthy Farmers a young Maid, for the *Queen of May*. She is drest in the gayest and best manner they can, and is attended by about twenty others, who are called Maids of Honour: she has also a young Man, who is her Captain, and has under his Command a good Number of inferior Officers. In Opposition to her, is the *Queen of Winter*, who is a Man drest in Woman's Clothes, with woollen Hoods, Furr Tippetts, and [96] loaded with the warmest and heaviest Habits one upon another: in the same manner are those who represent her Attendants drest, nor is she without a Captain and Troop for her Defence. Both being equipt as proper Emblems of the Beauty of the Spring, and the Deformity of the Winter, they set forth from their respective Quarters; the one preceeded by Violins and Flutes, the other with the rough Musick of the Tongs and the Cleavers. Both Companies march till they meet on a Common, and then their Trains engage in a Mock-Battle. If the *Queen of Winter's* Forces get the better, so far as to take the *Queen of May* Prisoner, she is ransomed for as much as pays the Expences of the Day. After this Ceremony, *Winter* and her Company retire, and divert themselves in a Barn, and the others remain on the Green, where having danced a considerable Time, they conclude the Evening with a Feast: the Queen at one Table with her Maids, the Captain with his Troop at another. There are seldom less than fifty or sixty Persons at each Board, but, as I have said before, not more than three or four knives.

George Waldron, *The History and Description of the Isle of Man* (London, 1744). A reprint of "A Description of the Isle of Man," *The Compleat Works, in Verse and Prose, of George Waldron*, ed. Theodosia Waldron. (n.p. [London]: n.pub. ["Printed for the Widow and Orphans"], 1731) 91–191. * The 1744 edition used here due to access to that copy.

[P2] ARCHIBALD CREGEEN, *A DICTIONARY OF THE MANKS LANGUAGE* (1835 [1837])

[26b] BOA'LDYN, *s.f.* May; as *laa boaldyn* (May-day); *mee ny boaldyn* (May-month). The etymology of this word is not well known; some say it is derived from *Boal* (a wall), and *Teine* (fire). Irish, in reference to the practice of going round the walls or fences with fire on the eve of this day; others, that it is derived from *Laa bwoailtchyn*, the day cattle or hsheep are first put to the fold; others, a corruption of *Blieautyn*, "the month of three milkings," as the Saxons called the month.

[50b] CROSH, *s.f.*: a cross or crucifix; a hand-reel; the figure of a cross sent round the parish by the Captain to assemble the people; *pl.* –YN.

[160a] KEIRN, *s.m.*: the round tree, the mountain ash, a berry of its fruit; a kind of bird.

Archibald Cregeen, *A Dictionary of the Manks Language* (Douglas & London & Liverpool: J. Quiggin & Whittaker, Treacher, and Arnot & Evans, Chegwin, and Hall, 1835 [1837]).

[P3] WILLIAM KENNISH, “OLD MAY EVE,” MONA’S ISLE, AND OTHER POEMS (1844)

“Old May Eve,” 48–64, in *Mona’s Isle, and Other Poems* (London: J. Bradley & Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1844) 48–64. Due to its length, some 474 lines, this poem is reproduced separately as an Appendix.

[P4] JOSEPH TRAIN, AN HISTORICAL AND STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF THE ISLE OF MAN (1845)

[117] On May-eve, the juvenile branches of nearly every family in the Island gathered primroses, and strewed them before the doors of their dwellings, to prevent the entrance of the fairies on that night. It was quite a novel sight to a stranger to the custom to see this delicate flower plentifully arranged at the door of every house he might pass, particularly in the towns, on the night in question or early on the following morning. This custom [118] is at present almost abandoned; indeed, it was continued to a late date more through the habit and amusement of children, than from superstition. Persons more advanced in life congregated on the mountains on May-eve, and to scare the fairies and witches, supposed to be roaming abroad on that particular night in numbers greater than ordinary, set fire to the gorse or *koinney*, and blew horns. Many of them remained on the hills till sunrise, endeavouring to pry into futurity, by observing particular omens. If a bright light were observed to issue, seemingly, from any house in the surrounding valleys, it was considered a certain indication that some member of that family would soon be married; but if a dim light were seen, moving slowly in the direction of the parish church, it was then deemed equally certain that a funeral would soon pass that way to the church-yard. Many stories are yet related, by old people, tending to perpetuate a belief in these omens; but the present generation, in general, regard with indifference “the signs” which formerly afforded matter of joy or grief to their ancestors.¹

*

*Laa Boaldyn*² or May-day is ushered in with blowing of horns on the mountains, and with a ceremony, which, says Waldron, “has something in the design of it pretty enough, and I believe will not be tiresome to my reader in the account. In almost all the great parishes they [119] chuse from among the daughters of the most wealthy

farmers a young maid for the *Queen of May*. She is drest in the gayest and best manner they can, and is attended by about twenty others, who are called maids of honour. She has also a young man who is her captain, and has under his command a good number of inferior officers.—In opposition to her is the *Queen of Winter*, who is a man drest in woman's clothes, with woollen hoods, fur tippets, and loaded with the warmest and heaviest habits, one upon another. In the same manner are those, who represent her attendants, drest; nor is she without a captain and troop for her defence. Both being equipt as proper emblems of the *Beauty of the Spring* and the *Deformity of the Winter*, they set forth from their respective quarters, the one preceded by violins and flutes, the other with the rough music of the tongs and the cleavers. Both parties march till they meet on a common, and then their trains engage in a mock battle. If the Queen of Winter's forces get the better, so as to take the Queen of May prisoner, she is ransomed for as much as pays the expenses of the day. After this ceremony, Winter and her company retire and divert themselves in a barn, and the others remain on the green, where, having danced a considerable time, they conclude the evening with a feast; the Queen at one table with her maids, the captain with his troop at another. There are seldom less than fifty or sixty at each board.”³ For the seizure of her majesty's person, that of one of her slippers was substituted, more recently, which was in like manner ransomed to defray the expenses of the pageant. The procession of the *Summer*—which was subsequently composed of little girls, and called the Maceboard,⁴—outlived that of its rival, the [120] Winter, some years; and now, like many other remnants of antiquity, has fallen into disuse.

¹ Communicated by Mr P. Curphey, of Douglas. Such lights are common in Wales. “It is a very commonly received opinion that within a short space before death, a light is seen proceeding from the house, and sometimes, it has been asserted, from the very bed of the sick person, and pursues its way to the church, where he or she is to be interred, precisely in the same track in which the funeral is afterwards to follow. This light is called *canwyll corpt*, or the corpse candle.”—*Cambrian Register*, 8vo. ed. 1796, p. 431.

² “The etymology of this word is not well known; some say it is derived from *boal*, a wall, and *teine*, fire (Irish), referring to the practice of going round the walls or fences with fire on the eve of this day; others that it is derived from *laa bwoailt chyn*, the day that cattle or sheep are first put to the fold; others, a corruption of *bliciauntyn*, ‘the month of three milkings,’ as the Saxons called the month of May.”—*Cregeen's Manks Dictionary*, p. 26. In Gaelic it is called *bealtuinn*.—*M'Alpin's Dictionary*, p. 32.

³ Waldron's Description, p. 154; MS. Account of Manks Customs.

⁴ The *Maceboard* (probably a corruption of May-sports), went from door to door inquiring if the inmates would buy the Queen's favour, which was composed of a small piece of ribbon.—*MS. Account of Manks Customs*.

Joseph Train, *An Historical and Statistical Account of the Isle of Man*, Vol. ii, 2 vols (Douglas: Mary A. Quiggin, 1845).

[P5] COL[ONEL] CHARLES JOHNSON, "POPULAR CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS OF THE ISLE OF MAN," MONA'S HERALD (1851)

LAA BOALDYN

This is May-eve; and it preserves its Manx ceremonial from the usage and worship of the Druids. The etymology of this word (Boaldyn) has given Cregeen the Manx lexicographer, Train the historian, and all the Celtic critics much trouble. They know not from whence to trace it. If not thought too pedantic, I will propose a solution. I think the origin of the day's observance casts light upon the *name* given to the day. Pliny speaking of the usages of the Druids says—"The first day of May was a great annual festival in honour of Belinus or the Sun. On the evening of this day prodigious fires men kindled in all their sacred places and oil the tops of all their hills and cairns, and many sacrifices were offered to that glorious luminary which now began to shine upon them with great warmth and lustre."

In the Gaelic tongue this day is still called *Beltein* (that is, the fire of Bel,) from the Druidical observance. Now *Boal* is a broad Manx gutteral corruption of *Bel*, and *dyn* is a Scandinavian spelling of *tein*; hence the Manx words *Laa Boaldyn* mean the day of Bel's fire—*laa* being the Manx word for day. Thus Cregeen's and Train's difficulties are got over.

On the evening preceding this great Druidical festival primroses, butter-cups, and such like flowers are plentifully strewed before the cottar doors of the Manx peasantry, to keep out the fairies on that sacred night. This floral charm certainly presents a pretty sight to the pedestrian stranger, when returning home by twilight, or by the light of the moon, from the mountains or wild glen's. But the Mayfires of Mona gilding her hill-tops from parish to parish are a sublime spectacle well worthy of particular notice. From the ignited dry gorse, ling, and heather, the surrounding mountains on this occasion are all in a blaze of burning glory, casting the reflection upon the mirrored surface of the surrounding sea. Probably most of the Manxmen who now practice these fires are ignorant of their origin. Some say they are kindled to frighten away the fairies and witches, so they shall not come to break the nets of the herring fishery the ensuing season. All consider them as a propitiatory sacrifice to some great ruling power, to obtain favour and ensure safety from the evil *genii* of the sea and the storm. But all such modern devotees to the custom should know, that these May-fires commemorate a religious festival centuries older than the star that guided the Eastern *Magi* to the manger of the infant Jesus. They are a shining, *blazing* proof that Mona was once the home of the Druids. There is something sublimely interesting to my conceptions, to travel over a land of such rare antiquities, and even at this late period of man's history, to be surrounded by the affecting mementos and proofs of the religious usages of a very venerable and ancient people. Christian though I am, yet I never wish to see abolished the abiding memorials of Druidism on the Isle of Man. There is a grandeur and a sublime glory that gather around the memory of those mysterious worshippers of Nature in her outer temple.

Their mystic and symbolic religion leads the mind back to those primeval times, when the volume of Nature, displayed to the senses of the rapt worshippers, summoned up their thoughts and their devout adoration to the Almighty builder and ruler of the universe.

Col[onel] Charles Johnson, "Popular Customs and Superstitions of the Isle of Man," *Mona's Herald*, 27 August 1851, 4a–c.

[P6] J.W. THOMAS, "PROPITIATING THE FAIRIES," NOTES & QUERIES (1853)

[618a] A cross was tied in the tail of a cow "to keep her from *bad bodies*." On May morning it was deemed of the greatest importance to avoid going to a neighbour's house for fire; a turf was therefore kept burning all night at home. Flowers growing in a hedge, especially green or yellow ones, were good to keep off the fairies.

J.W. Thomas, "Propitiating the Fairies," *Notes & Queries* viii (1853), 617b–18a.

[P7] REV. JOHN KELLY, FOCKLEYR MANNINAGH AS BAARLAGH (1866)

[15a] BAALTINN (LAA), s. May-day, or the day of Baal's fire, or of the Sun, from *tinn* celestial fire, and *Baal* the god Baal, or the Sun. On this day [the eve of this day.—ED.] the inhabitants kindle fires on the summits of the highest hills, in continuation of the practice of the Druids, who made the cattle, and probably "the children, to pass through the fire," using certain ceremonies to expiate the sins of the people; but the modern practice is, for each balla or town to kindle a fire, so that the wind may drive the smoke over their corn fields, cattle and habitations. Which custom, independent of the religious use, might have a temporal benefit also in view, by killing the insects which infest the trees and corn at that season. It is also the usage to put out the culinary fires on that day, and to rekindle them with some of the sacred fire. On this day, likewise, the young people of different districts form themselves into two parties, called the Summer and the Winter (*Sourey as Geurey*), and having appointed a place of meeting, a mock engagement takes place, when the winter party gradually recedes before the summer, and at last quits the field. There is an appropriate song, the burden of which is, *Hug eh my fainey; sourey lbien, &c.* ["*He gave my ring; summer with us,*" &c. I can make no sense of this.—ED.] On this day, and also on Laa Sourey (the first of November), malefactors were punished with death by fire, and human sacrifices were offered to Baal; which, however, both at Carthage and in Ireland, according to the ancient historians, were laid aside, and the sacrifice of beasts substituted in their stead. Val. Gr. 124. On May-eve, the inhabitants dress their houses with flowers, and before every door a considerable space is strewed with primroses; and crosses are made of mountain-ash (*caorin*), which are fastened to their cattle and worn by themselves as preservatives against witchcraft. On this eve also the damsel places a snail between two pewter dishes, and

expects to find next morning the name of her future husband in visible characters on the dish; but the success of this depends on her watching until midnight, and having first purified her hands and face by washing them in the dew of wheat.

Rev. William Gill, ed., *Fockleyr Manninagh as Baarlagh liorish Juan y Kelly* (Douglas: Manx Society, 1866). [Also, Rev. William Gill, ed., *The Manx Dictionary in Two Parts. First, Manx and English; and the Second, English and Manx* (Douglas: Manx Society, 1866).]

[P8] J.M. JEFFCOTT, "MAY-FIRES, ISLE OF MAN," NOTES & QUERIES (1867)

[I44a] The custom of making, on the night of May II (May eve, O.S.), large fires similar to the Irish fires referred to by Mr J. HARRIS GIBSON in "N. & Q." (3rd s. xii. 42), still obtains in the Isle of Man. On a fine evening these fires have a very beautiful appearance, as they blaze on the mountains and other elevations. While the fires are burning, horns are blown in all directions. It is customary, too, on the same evening to place "May-flowers," as they are termed by the peasantry, at the entrances of the cottages, and of the out-offices in which the domestic animals of the farm are kept. The flower used for the purpose is the marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*). Crosses made of sprays of the mountain ash—or *keirn*, as it is called in the Manx dialect—are worn on the same night.

Though the pretext for these customs is protection against witchcraft, there seems to be little faith now entertained as to their efficacy. The peasantry say that the fires are supposed to burn the wizards and witches; while the *keirn* cross, and the flowers and leaves of the *Caltha*, are supposed to possess a charm against the supernatural powers of enchanters and mountain hags.

Sir John Lubbock, in his learned and interesting *Prehistoric Times*, when alluding to Professor Nilsson's opinion that the Phoenicians had settlements in Scandinavia, says:

The festival of Baal or Balder was, he [Professor Nilsson] tells us, celebrated on Midsummer's night in Scania, and far up into Norway, almost to the Loffoden Islands, until within the last fifty years. A wood fire was made upon a hill or mountain, and the people of the neighbourhood gathered together in order, like Baal's prophets of old, to dance round it, shouting and singing. This Midsummer's-night-fire has even retained in some parts the ancient names of Balders bal, or Balders fire. P. 47.

Sir John says further:

Baal has given his name to many Scandinavian localities: as, for instance, the Baltic, the Great and Little Belt, Beltberga, Baleshaugen, Balestranden, &c. P. 48.

The Rev. John Kelly, LL.D., who died in 1809, in his *Manx and English Dictionary* (which had not been published, until recently printed by the Manx Society, and edited by the Rev. William Gill) has ingeniously endeavoured to show that

numerous Manx words are derived from the name of the Phoenician deity, and indicate the worship of the sun as Baal. Mr. Archibald Cregeen, however, in his *Dictionary of the Manx Language*, published in 1835 (a work of great research and ability), does not, I believe, even mention the name of the god.

Dr. Kelly gives *Baal* as a Manx word, signifying “Baal, Apollo, the sun, Beel, Bel or Bol, king of the Assyrians,” &c. In reference to the Manx word *Grian*, the sun, he remarks:

[144b] The sun was anciently worshipped by the Celts under the name of Bel, Baal, Baal, Boal, or Beul, and by the Greeks under the name of Apollo, which differs very little in the sound. He [Apollo] was called *Grian*, from *grianey* or *grianagh*, to bask, heat, or scorch; which word was Latinised into Grynæus and Grannus, which became a classical epithet of Apollo.

The alleged derivation of Grynæus from the Manx word *grian*, the sun, few antiquaries will, I think, be prepared to adopt. It is, I think, quite as probable that Apollo, as schoolboys are taught to believe, derived the epithet from the town of Gryneum, where he is said to have had a temple. It is, moreover, doubtful that Apollo and the sun were identical. Dr. Lempriere says:

Apollo has been taken for the sun, but it may be proved by different passages in the ancient writers that Apollo, the Sun, Phoebus, and Hyperion were all different characters and deities, though confounded together. When once Apollo was addressed as the Sun, and represented with a crown of rays on his head, the idea was adopted by every writer, and thence arose the mistakes.

Dr. Kelly gives the word *Baalan-feale-oin*, which he translates—“The chaplet of the plant (?) worn on the eve of St. John the Baptist.” He says that the etymology of the word is, *An*, a chaplet, *Baal*, of Baal, *feailly*, on the feast, *Eoin*, of John. The word is, however, spelled by the editor *Bollan-y-feail-oin*. Mr. Kelly does not seem to have known the name of this plant, which is the mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*).

The words *Laa Boaldyn* (Cregeen), May-day, Dr. Kelly writes *Baaltinn* (*Laa*); and attaches the meaning—“May-day, or the day of Baal’s fire or of the sun; from *tinn*, celestial fire, and *Baal*, the god Baal, or the sun.” Boayldin (Cregeen), a name given to two valleys in the island, is also spelled by Dr. Kelly in the same manner, and supposed by him to have the same etymology as the other word applied to May. He also affirms that the word *Tynwald* has the same etymology, a word which is clearly not a Manx word at all, but is derived from the two Danish words *ting*, a court, and *bold*, a mound of earth the Court on the Mound, where the Manx statutes are promulgated.

Of *Laa Boaldyn*, May-day, Cregeen says its etymology is not well known; but observes that it is said by some to have been derived “from *boal*, a wall, and *teine* (fire), Irish, in reference to the practice of going round the fences with fire on the eve of this day.” As to the word *Boayldyn*, Cregeen states that the valleys are no doubt so

called from *boayl downin*, a low place. As *boayl* means place, why should not *boayl tinn* mean the place of fire, and not Baal's fire?

Dr. Nuttall, in his *Archæological and Classical Dictionary*, quoting, I think, from Dr. Jamieson, says that—"Among the ancient Scandinavians and Caledonians the words *bael*, *baal*, *bail*, *bayle*, &c., denoted a funeral pile, or the blaze there [145a] from." The word *baal*, in the Danish language, signifies "a pile of wood"; but the Eastern word Baal, I believe, denotes "lord." The word *beéal*, in the Manx dialect, means "entrance": thus, *beéal y phurt* denotes an entrance into a harbour. Is it not possible that some at least of the prefixes, forming parts of Scandinavian words, and mentioned by Sir John Lubbock as being derived from the Phœnician Baal, may have had their origin in equivalents of *bual*, an entrance, *boal*, a wall, or *boayl*, a place, in the Celtic or some other ancient European languages?

That the sun was worshipped by the early inhabitants of Man, I am much disposed to believe. The form of some of the ancient tumuli of the island leads to this belief: two seem to have been constructed in an annular form, with radiations. But if the sun was a deity among its primeval occupants, was he worshipped under the name of Baal?

J.M. JEFFCOTT.

Isle of Man.

J.M. Jeffcott, "May-Fires, Isle of Man," *Notes & Queries* (3rd ser.), xii (1867), 144-45a. This piece in full reproduced separately as an Appendix.

[P9] A.W. MOORE, THE FOLK-LORE OF THE ISLE OF MAN (1891)

[110] May 11—*Oie Voaldyn*, or May-day Eve—was the occasion of many superstitious observances. On this evening the Fairies were supposed to be peculiarly active. To propitiate them, and to ward off the influence of evil Spirits and Witches, who were also active at this time, green leaves or boughs and *sumark*, or primrose flowers, were strewn on the threshold, and branches of the *cuirn*, or mountain-ash, were made into small crosses without the aid of a knife, which was on no account to be used, and stuck over the doors of the dwelling-houses and cow-houses. Cows were further protected from the same influences by having the *bollan-feaill-Eoin* ('John's-feast wort')¹ placed in their houses. This was also one of the occasions on which no one would give fire, and on which fires were and are lit on the hills to drive away the Fairies, Witches, &c., and also to purify the fields, cattle, and horses by the smoke passing over them. It is said that a handful of gorse was formerly lit in each field to purify it.

With reference to the practice of not giving fire, Waldron remarks that there was not one of the native families "but keeps a small quantity of fire continually burning, no one daring to depend on his neighbour's vigilance in a thing which he imagines is of such consequence: everyone consequently believing that if it should ever happen that no fire were to be found throughout, most terrible revolutions and mischiefs

would immediately ensue;”—and, as to the lighting of fires, Kelly says that “the inhabitants kindle fires on the summits of the highest hills, in continuation of the practice of the Druids, who made the cattle, and probably the children, ‘to pass through the fire,’ using certain ceremonies to expiate the sins of the people; but the northern practice is for each *balla* or town to kindle a fire, so that the wind may drive the smoke over their cornfields, cattle, and habitations.... The inhabitants dress their houses with flowers, and before every door a considerable space is strewed with primroses. ... On this eve also the damsel places a snail between two pewter dishes, and expects to find next morning the name of her future husband in visible characters on the dish; but the success of this depends on her watching till midnight, and having first purified her hands and face by washing them in the dew of the wheat.”²

[III] Fifty years ago the celebration of May-day Eve was still very general, as will be seen from the following account extracted from the *Mona's Herald* newspaper of the 5th of May, 1837; but now it has almost died out: “On May Day eve the people of the Isle of Man have, from time immemorial, burned all the whin (gorse) bushes in the Island, conceiving that they thereby burned all the witches and fairies which they believe take refuge there after sunset. The Island presented the scene of a universal conflagration, and to a stranger, unacquainted with our customs, it must appear very strange to see both old and young persons gathering particular herbs, and planting them at their doors and in their dwellings for the purpose of preventing the entrance of the witches.”

It is thus clear that the Manx people placed very great reliance on the influence of fire in protecting them from the powers of evil. This influence was also made use of—or would seem to have been made use of—by sacrificing animals as propitiatory offerings to the powers above mentioned. Such a method would naturally be supposed to have belonged to past ages only if there was not evidence that lambs have been burnt on May-day Eve or May-day—son oural—for a sacrifice within living memory. Such sacrifices seem to have been distinct in their purpose from the burning of animals already mentioned (in Chapter v) for discovering Witches or driving away disease.³

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[III] May 12—*May-Day*, or *Laa-Boaldyn*, the *Beltaine*, as it was called in Irish, was the fire of the great Celtic feasts, and was held at the opening of the summer half of the year. Cormac, in his Glossary, says that this name, *Beltaine*, arose “from two fires which the Druids of Erin used to make with great incantations”; and he adds that cattle used to be brought to these fires and driven between them, as a safeguard against diseases. According to Jameson, “the Gaelic and Irish word, *Beal-tine* or *Beil-tine* signifies Bel's fire; as composed of *Baal* or *Belis* one of the names of the sun in Gaelic, and *tein* signifying fire;” but, as a matter of fact, this is all pure guess-work, no one having given a satisfactory derivation of the name.⁴

At an early hour on this morning the maidens went forth to gather the dew, and wash their faces in it, as it was supposed to ensure a good complexion, as well as to render the hostility of the Witches innocuous. At an equally early hour, horns were blown to prevent the Fairies from enticing children away. Later on in the day a Queen of the May was chosen, according to Waldron, in the following fashion: "In almost all [112] the great parishes they choose from among the daughters of the most wealthy farmers a young maid for the Queen of May. She is dressed in the gayest and best manner they can, and is attended by about twenty others, who are called maids of honour, she has also a young man, who is her captain, and has under his command a great number of inferior officers. In opposition to her is the Queen of Winter, who is a man dressed in women's clothes, with woollen hoods, fur tippets, and loaded with the warmest and heaviest habits one upon another; in the same manner are those who represent her attendants dressed; nor is she without a captain and troop for her defence. Both being equipped as proper emblems of the beauty of the spring and the deformity of the winter, they set forth from their respective quarters; the one preceded by violins and flutes, the other with the rough music of tongs and cleavers. Both companies march till they meet on a common, and then their trains engage in a mock-battle. If the Queen of Winter's forces get the better, so far as to take the Queen of May prisoner, she is ransomed for as much as pays the expenses of the day. After this ceremony, Winter and her company retire and divert themselves in a barn, and the others remain on the green, where, having danced a considerable time, they conclude the evening with a feast, the queen at one table with her maids, the captain with his troop at another. There are seldom less than fifty or sixty persons at each board." For the seizure of her majesty's person, that of one of her slippers was substituted more recently, which was in like manner ransomed to defray the expenses of the pageant. The procession of the summer, which was subsequently composed of little girls, and called the *Maceboard*, outlived that of its rival, the winter, some years. The Maceboard went from door to door, inquiring if the inmates would buy the queen's favour, which was composed of a small piece of ribbon; this has also fallen into disuse.

This custom was evidently derived from the Northmen, whose proceedings on this day are thus described by Olaus Magnus, who wrote in the sixteenth century: "The Southern Swedes and Goths that are very far from the Pole, have a custom, that on the first day of May, when the sun is in Taurus, there should be two horse troops appointed of young and lusty men, as if they were to fight some hard conflict. One of these is led on by a captain, chosen by lot, who has the name and habit of Winter. He is clothed with divers skins, and adorned with fire forks, and casting about snow balls and pieces of ice, that he may prolong the cold, he rides up and down in triumph, and he shows and makes himself the harder, the more the icicles seem to hang from their stoves (?) The chieftain of the other is for summer, and is called Captain Floria, and is clothed with green boughs and leaves and summer garments

that are not very strong. [113] Both these ride from the fields into the city, from divers places, one after another, and with their fire spears they fight, and make a public show, that Summer bath conquered Winter. Both sides striving to get the victory, that side more forcibly assaults the other which on that day seems to borrow more force from the air, whether temperate or sharp. If the winter yet breathes frost, they lay aside their spears, and riding up and down, cast about upon the spectators ashes mingled with live sparks of fire taken from the graves or from the altar; and they, who in the same dress and habit are auxiliary troops, cast fire-balls from their horses. Summer, with his band of horse, shows openly his boughs of birch, or tiel-tree, which are made green long before by art, as by the heat of their stoves and watering them, and privately brought in as if they newly came from the wood. But because nature is thus defrauded, those that fight for winter press on the more, that the victory may not be got by fraud; yet the sentence is given for summer by the favourable judgement of the people, who are unwilling to endure the sharp rigor of winter any longer; and so summer gets the victory with the general applause of them all, and he makes a gallant feast for his company, and confirms it by drinking cups, which he could scarcely win with spears. This is the custom of driving away the winter, and receiving of summer.”

The Welsh story of the contest of Gwyn, as representing the powers of darkness, and Gwythur, as representing the summer sun, makes them fight for the possession of a beautiful damsel on the first of May. Gwythur gains the victory, which symbolises the recovery by the Sun-God of his bride at the beginning of summer, after his antagonist had gained possession of her at the beginning of winter.

¹ See Chapter VII.

² Kelly: Manx Dictionary, p. 15. Manx Society: Vol. XIII.

³ See Chapter VII.

⁴ Kelly's (see Manx Dictionary) notion of a connection with the Phœnician God Baal is an evident absurdity.

A.W. Moore, *The Folk-lore of the Isle of Man* (Douglas & London: David and Son & David Nutt, 1891). See Chapter VI, “Customs and Superstitions connected with the Seasons,” 102–40.

[152] The Elder tree, or *Tramman*, was vulgarly supposed to have been the tree upon which Judas Iscariot hanged himself, and it was possibly on this account that great reliance was formerly placed on its sanative and mystical virtues. It was used as a charm for protecting houses and gardens from the influence of Sorcery and Witchcraft, and, even at the present time, an Elder tree may be observed growing by almost every old cottage in the Island. Its leaves, like those of the *Cuirn*, were picked on May-eve, and affixed to doors and windows to protect the house from witchcraft.

A.W. Moore, *The Folk-lore of the Isle of Man* (Douglas & London: David and Son & David Nutt, 1891). See Chapter VII, "Superstitions connected with the Sun, Animals, Trees, Plants, Sacred Edifices, &c.," 141–55.

[PIO] JOHN RHYS, "MANX FOLK-LORE AND SUPERSTITIONS (I)," *FOLKLORE II* (1891)

[292] The persons who had the power of turning themselves into hares were believed to be abroad and very active, together with the whole demon world, on the eve of May-day of the Old Style. And a middle-aged man from the parish of Andreas related to me how he came three or four times across a woman, reputed to be a witch, carrying on her evil practices at the junction of cross-roads, or the meeting of three boundaries. This happened once very early on old May morning, and afterwards he met her several times as he was returning home from visiting his sweetheart. He warned the witch that if he found her again that he would kick her: that is what he says. Well, after a while he did surprise her again at work at four cross-roads, [293] somewhere near Lezayre. She had a circle, he said, as large as that made by hoes in threshing, swept clean around her. He kicked her and took away her besom, which he hid till the middle of the day. The men made the farm boys fetch some dry gorse, and he put the witch's besom on the top of it. Thereupon fire was set to the gorse and, wonderful to relate, the besom, as it burned, crackled and made reports like guns going off. In fact the noise could be heard from Andreas Church—that is to say, miles away. The besom had on it "seventeen sorts of knots," he said, and the woman ought to have been burned; in fact, he added that she did not long survive her besom. The man who related this to me is hale and strong, living now in the parish of Michael, and not in that of Andreas, where he was born.

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[301] One more instance: an octogenarian woman, born in the parish of Bride, and now living at Kirk Andreas, saw, when she was a "lump of a girl" of ten or fifteen years of age, a live sheep being burnt in a field in the parish of Andreas, on May-day, whereby she meant the first of May reckoned according to the Old Style. She asserts very decidedly that it was *son oural*, "as a sacrifice," as she put it, and "for an object to the public": those were her words when she expressed herself in English. Further, she made the statement that it was a custom to burn a sheep on old May-day for a sacrifice. I was fully alive to the interest of this evidence, and cross-examined her so far as her age allows of it, and [302] I find that she adheres to her statement with all firmness. I distinguish two or three points in her evidence: (1) I have no doubt that she saw, as she was passing by a certain field on the borders of Andreas parish, a live sheep being burnt on old May-day. (2) But her statement that it was *son oural*, or as a sacrifice, was probably only an inference drawn by her, possibly years afterwards, on hearing things of the kind discussed. (3) Lastly I am convinced that she did hear the May-day sacrifice discussed, both in Manx and in English: her words, "for an object

to the public," are her imperfect recollection of a phrase used in her hearing by somebody more ambitious of employing English abstract terms than she is; and the formal nature of her statement in Manx, that it was customary on May-day to burn as a sacrifice one head of sheep ("*Laa Boaldyn va cliaghtey dy lostey son oural un baagh keyrragh*"), produces the same impression on my mind, that she is only repeating somebody else's words. I mention this more especially as I have failed to find anybody else in Andreas or Bride, or indeed in the whole island, who will now confess to having ever heard of the sheep sacrifice on old May-day.

The time assigned to the sheep sacrifice, namely May-day, leads me to make some remarks on the importance of that day among the Celts. The day meant is, as I have already said, Old May-day, in Manx *Shenn Laa Boaldyn*. This was a day when systematic efforts were made to protect man and beast against elves and witches; for it was then that people carried crosses of rowan in their hats and put May flowers on the tops of their doors and elsewhere as preservatives against all malignant influences. With the same object also in view crosses of rowan were likewise fastened to the tails of cattle, small crosses which had to be made without the help of a knife. Early on May morning one went out to gather the dew as a thing of great virtue, as in other countries. One woman who had been out on this errand years ago told me that she washed her face with [303] the dew in order to secure luck, a good complexion, and immunity against witches. The break of this day is also the signal for firing the ling or the gorse, which used to be done in order to burn out the witches fond of taking the form of the hare; and even guns, I am told, were freely used to shoot any game met with on that morning. With the proper charge some of the witches were now and then hit and wounded, whereupon they resumed the human form and remained cripples for the rest of their lives. Fire, however, appears to have been the chief agency relied on to clear away the witches and other malignant beings; and I have heard of this use of fire having been carried so far that a practice was sometimes observed—as, for example in Lezayre—of burning gorse, however little, in the hedge of each field on a farm in order to drive away the witches and secure luck.

The man who told me this, on being asked whether he had ever heard of cattle being driven through fire or between two fires on May-day, replied that it was not known to him as a Manx custom, but that it was as an Irish one. A cattle-dealer whom he named used on May-day to drive his cattle through fire so as to singe them a little, as he believed that would preserve them from harm. He was an Irishman, who came to the island for many years, and whose children are settled in the island now. On my asking him if he knew whence the dealer came, he answered, "From the mountains over there," pointing to the Mountains of Mourne looming indefinite in the mists on the western horizon. The Irish custom known to my Manx informant is interesting both as throwing light on the Manx custom, and as being the continuation of a very ancient rite mentioned by Cormac. That writer, or somebody in his name, says that Beltane, May-day, was so called from the "lucky fire," or the

“two fires” which the druids of Erin used to make on that day with great incantations; and cattle, he adds, used to be brought to those fires, or driven between them, as a safeguard against the diseases [304] of the year. Cormac¹ says nothing, it will be noticed, as to one of the cattle or the sheep being sacrificed for the sake of prosperity to the rest. However, Scotch² May-day customs point to a sacrifice having been once usual, and that possibly of human beings, and not of sheep, as in the Isle of Man. I have elsewhere³ tried to equate these Celtic May-day practices with the Thargelia⁴ of the Athenians of antiquity. The Thargelia were characterised by peculiar rites, and among other things then done, two adult persons were lead about, as it were scapegoats, and at the end they were sacrificed and burnt, so that their ashes might be dispersed. Here we seem to be on the track of a very ancient Aryan practice, although the Celtic date does not quite coincide with the Greek one.

It is probably in some ancient May-day custom that we are to look for the key to a remarkable placename occurring several times in the island: I allude to that of *Cronk yn Irree Laa*, which literally means the Hill of the Rise of the Day. This is the name of one of the mountains in the south of the island, but it is also borne by one of the knolls near the eastern end of the range of low hills ending abruptly on the coast between Ramsey and Bride Parish, and quite a small knoll bears the name near the church of Jurby.⁵ I have heard of a fourth instance, which, however [305] has escaped both my memory and note-book. It has been attempted to explain the name as meaning the Hill of the Watch by Day, in reference to the old institution of Watch and Ward on conspicuous places in the island; but that explanation is inadmissible as doing violence to the phonetics of the words in question.⁶ I am rather inclined to think that the name everywhere refers to an eminence to which the surrounding inhabitants resorted for a religious purpose on a particular day in the year. I should suggest that it was to do homage to the Sun on May morning but this conjecture is offered only to await a better explanation.

¹ See the Stokes-O'Donovan edition of *Cormac* (Calcutta, 1868), pp. 19, 23.

² Sir John Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland*, xi, 620; Pennant's *Tour in Scotland in 1769* (3rd edition, Warrington, 1774, i, 97, 186, 291); Thomas Stephens' *Gododin*, pp. 124–26; and Dr Murray in the *New English Dictionary*, s.v. *Beltane*.

³ In my *Hibbert Lectures* on Celtic Heathendom, pp. 517–21.

⁴ As to the Thargelia and Delia, see Preller's *Griechische Mythologie*, i, 209–10, and A. Mommsen's *Heortologie*, pp. 414–25.

⁵ It is my impression that it is crowned with a small tumulus, and that it forms the highest ground in Jurby, which was once an island by itself. The one between Ramsey and Bride is also probably the highest point of the range. But these are questions which I should like to see further examined, say in the pages of the *Manx Journal*, edited by Mr P.M.C. Kermode, the *Lioar Manninagh*.

⁶ Cronk yn Irree Laa is the name as it is used by all Manxmen whose pronunciation has not been tampered with by antiquarians. To convey the other meaning, referring to the day-watch, the name would have to be Cronk ny Harrey Laa; in fact, a part of the Howe in the

south of the Island is called Cronk ny Harrey, "the Hill of the Watch." Mr Moore tells me that the Jurby Cronk was one of the eminences for "Watch and Ward"; but he is now of opinion that the high mountain of Cronk yn Irree Laa in the South was not. As to the duty of the inhabitants to keep "Watch and Ward" over the island, see the passage concerning it extracted from the *Manx Statutes* (vol. i, p. 65), by Mr Moore in his *Manx Surnames*, pp. 182-83; also my preface to the same work, pp. v-viii.

John Rhys, "Manx Folk-Lore and Superstitions (i)," *Folklore*, ii.3, (1891), 284-313.

[PII] **KARL ROEDER, "CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FOLK LORE OF THE ISLE OF MAN,"
YN LIOAR MANNINAGH (1897)**

MAY DAY EVE (OIE VOALDYN), MAY 12TH

[182] "They used to make bonfires to chase the witches away, and get witch-wood (*cuirn*) for making crosses and putting it on the cow's tail and over the cow's door to keep witchcraft away. A woman, Billy Quirk's wife, keeps a tree now for that purpose."

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"On the May Day Eve they blow the horns on the hills."

Karl Roeder, "Contributions to the Folk Lore of the Isle of Man," *Yn Lioar Manninagh* iii.iv (1897), 129-91.

[PI2] **KARL ROEDER, "FOLKLORE," YN LIOAR MANNINAGH (1892)**

Every beginning of May, buttercups are gathered and strewn on the door steps, and a little child brought a bunch to put on the door step to keep witches away.

They take two twigs of Rowan tree and put them across, tied with an old piece of cassolley (old sheered wood), and stick them outside the door on the top to keep witches away.

Karl Roeder, "Folklore," *Yn Lioar Manninagh* i.x (1892), 289-92.

[PI3] **CHARLES ROPER, "ISLE OF MAN SUPERSTITIONS," WHERE THE BIRDS SING
(1894)**

[184] On May Day, may-flowers are tied in bunches to the cows' tails, and hung also over the doors. If you slip out early that morning into your neighbour's field, and sweep the dew off his grass into your apron, saying, meanwhile "Come all to me, come all to me," you will have plenty of milk during the coming year, but your neighbour will not. On May Day the witch is burnt with bonfires of heather, &c. If, however, fire is taken out of the house that day, bad luck will prevail in it for twelve months at least. If a cow goes sick, dust swept off the road and sprinkled over its back will cure it. He who gets the first pail of water out of the well on May morning, will secure the fat of the water, and will have health and strength all the year.

“Isle of Man Superstitions,” Chapter xxvii, 181–203, in Charles Roper, *Where the Birds Sing: A Selection of Rustic Sketches and Idylls of Common Life* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1894).

[PI4] DR JOHN CLAGUE, COOINAGHTYN MANNINAGH: MANX REMINISCENCES
([1911])

[PI4.1] [47] Witches were thought to have full power on May Day (Old), and they used to try all the power they knew to do harm to other people. They have been seen standing outside of houses early on May Day morning, and working their arms to draw the good luck from other people.

On the eve of May Day the young boys would have a cross of mountain ash (kern) in their caps, and a cross would be tied on the tail of cattle, or any other animal that would be in the house.

The right way to make a kern cross is to split one stick and put the other stick (piece) through it, and thus bind them together.

May-flowers (king-cups), rushes, and flags were placed before the doors of the houses and cow-houses, to keep them from harm and bad spirits.

Flowers and plants were placed on the door side, and window seats, in the houses to keep fairies away.

Water was always kept in the crock (large water dish) at night for the fairies.

[49] Mugwort was worn in the coat, and sometimes in the caps, on the eve of May Day, and on the eve of St John’s Day, fires were lighted, and fire in the hedges, and gorse was burnt to frighten away the bad spirits. They made the hedges look like walls of fire. That is the meaning (root) of the word, “Boal Teine,” Wall of fire. Young boys jumped through the fire, and the cattle were sometimes driven through the fire, to keep them from harm for the whole year.

Slide-carts of mugwort would be drawn from place to place, to drive the bad spirits away.

Mugwort was thought to keep off every kind of disease put (caused) by bad spirits, for they were very fearful of it. The right way to keep the herb was to pull it up by the roots on the eve of St John’s day, in the middle of the night. If it was pulled up in that way, it would keep its use right for the whole year.

[51] Some people called it the white herb, owing to the white colour under the leaves.

Horns were blown through the night, and “dollans”¹ were struck (beaten, played).

People have forgotten that bells were used at first to frighten away bad spirits from the church.

[PI4.2] [51] People were saying that on May morning soon on the day (early in the day) Kerry Mac Mollagh² was “drying the cows and killing the calves.”

[PI4.3] [51] After the horns were blown, the bells rung, the skin drums played, the May-flowers, rushes, flags, and primroses placed before the doors, and the kern crosses in the caps of the boys, and on the tails of the cattle, and the sliding carts of St John's wort drawn from place to place, the bad spirits driven away, and people and cattle had walked through the fire, then the fields were ready to put the cattle on the grass.

The folds were the place for the cattle in the night.

[53] On May Day a great feast was held in Castletown, and people from every part of the Island used to come in their holiday clothes.

A sham fight was held, a sign of the fight between summer and winter.

The summer company of ladies and gentlemen was led by the prettiest young woman, she was called the Queen of Summer; and the winter party of working men and working women were dressed in a queer way, and in any way they liked, for fun and play, and the leader was called the King of Winter. The last man who was King of Winter was Captain Tyldesley of Beemakem.

[55] The winter party was driven by the summer party on the road to Scarlett, and when they reached as far as Scarlett, the fight was over, a sign that the sun had gone down in the west.

Then the company had meat and drink, and after that there was dancing and games of every kind.

They used to get as many fiddlers as they could, and people who were acquainted with each other made themselves into small companies, and enjoyed the company of each other in the best way they could.

¹ Hoops with sheepskin stretched on them.

² Kitty (daughter of) the Son of the Rough—a reputed witch about whom the above saying became traditional.

Dr John Clague, *Cooïnaghtyn Manninagh: Manx Reminiscences By the Late Dr John Clague* (Castletown: M.J. Backwell, n.d. [1911]).

[PI5] KARL ROEDER, "MANX NOTES & QUERIES," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (1901)

LAA BOALDYN (MAY DAY)

The season has returned again,
 When the *bwillogh* is all in bloom,
 By April's sun and showers of rain,
 And evening dew and midnight gloom.
 I still remember days gone by,
 When I was but a little lad,
 We plucked the yellow flowers with joy,
 And on May-eve we all were glad.

At every door we laid them down,
 That fair Titania might see
 The beauteous flowers scatter'd round,
 And dance around with fairy glee.

The Fairy Queen—the old folk said—
 Was going round on old May-night
 When all mankind was gone to bed,
 And in the flowers did delight.

She kindly blessed each little cot,
 Where yellow flowers did appear:
 If there were none—she blessed them not
 But gave bad luck through all the year.

I still remember on May-day,
 Those flowers scatter'd in Cregnaish,
 But since the Queen is gone away
 No flowers at the door we place.

No more among the *trammon* trees,
 The little elves or fairies swing,
 Hopping amongst the leaves like bees,
 Or little birds upon the wing.

And branches of the rowan tree
 Were carefully in crosses made,
 And placed in holes where none could see,
 To keep away each witching jade.

While bonfires blazed on every hill,
 To keep the *butchering* crew at bay.
 And some folks kindle fires still
 To scare the witches—people say.

The little elves now dance no more,
 Nor sing in Manx their midnight song
 Among the flow'rets at the door,
 And home to fairy-land are gone.

But these are now things of the past,

For witch alike and elf are flown,
 From all the hills, save Cronk Glenchass—
 'Tis said they claim that as their own.

Note: The *bwillogh* is the *Caltha palustris*, and a grand Manx fairy flower. The *Trammon*, or elder tree, is dear to the Manx elves and fairies. The *Rowan* Tree, or mountain ash, plays an important part in the celebration of May Eve and its berries, when placed on cow byres, and tied in the tails of cows, or hung over the threshold of the house, or worn by the milk-maids and fastened to the pails and milk vats, *etc.*, acted as powerful agencies against witchcraft and evil spirits and their dark work. Cronk Glenchass, or the dry glen, was and still is supposed to be a favourite haunt of the Manx fairies, and I have a large collection of stories and legends referring to it.

I sent you above little composition from Edward Farquhar, descriptive of old Manx May-day, which will interest many of your Insular readers.

Karl Roeder, "Manx Notes & Queries: No. 18," *Isle of Man Examiner*, 26 October 1901, 6a.

[P16] KARL ROEDER, "MANX NOTES & QUERIES, NO 29," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (1901)

29. THE MANX MAY FLOWERS *

On May Day (I quote *Mona's Herald*, May 5th, 1837) the people in the Isle of Man from time immemorial burnt all the (yellow-flowered) whin bushes in the Island, conceiving that thereby they burn all the witches and fairies which they believe take refuge there. Then also old and young gathered particular herbs and planted them at their doors and in their dwellings for the purpose of preventing the entrance of the witches. In another place we read: "On May Eve they gathered primroses and strewed them before the doors of their dwellings to keep away the fairies on that night. They congregated in the mountains on May Eve, and to scare the fairies and witches supposed to be roaming on that particular night in numbers greater than ordinary, set fire to the gorse or *conney* and blew horns."

Folkard in his *Plantlore* tells us that on May Day country people strew Marsh Marygold before their doors, and twine them into garlands, and in another passage: "To yellow flowers growing in the hedgerows the fairies have a special dislike, and wilt never frequent a place where they abound. Timorous folk took precautions for excluding elfin visitors from their dwellings by hanging over their doors boughs of St John's Wort (which also bears a yellow flower) at midnight on St John's Eve." In some parts of Russia, according to Folkard, the country people heat their baths on the eve of St John's and place in them the herb *kunalnitza* (a yellow crowfoot or *ranunculus*), in other parts they place herbs, on the same anniversary, upon the roofs of the houses and stables, as a safeguard against evil spirits; the French peasantry rub the udders of their cows with similar herbs to ensure plenty of milk, and place them over the doorways of cattle sheds and stables.

We see that these customs were observed both at May Eve (*Oie'l Voaldyn*) and on midsummer Eve (*Oie'l Eoin*) which mark two very important Manx festivals. The May Day in Gaelic is the *la buidhe bealtuinn* = the day of the yellow or golden *bealtain*; and in Irish plant lore the marsh marygold, or *caltha palustris*, is called, amongst other names, *lus buide bealtaine* = the flower of yellow bealtaine, and in Cregneish I have likewise heard it called *lus y voaldyn* = flower of *Bealtain*. Another Irish name is *bearnan bealtine*, or the *bealtin* chaplet, probably because it was worn as a covering for the head, as was likewise the mugwort. We notice the frequent recurrence of *buidhe* = yellow or golden, in all these words. Besides this name we find another word for it used by the Manx peasantry, variously spelt: *bellióch*, *bwillógh*, *booliúgh* and *bluight*; *bluight* in Manx means milk (Gaelic *blvochd*, Irish *bleachd* = milk, kine, cows, giving milk) which seems also to be traceable in the Gaelic plant name: *bliochan* = marygold. There is another plant name in Manx: *bluightagh vheaun* a plant not botanically defined in Kelly's *Dictionary*, but which I surmise is to be equated with the Irish, *bainne bo bleacht*, or verbally, milk of the milch cow, a name given to the cowslip. *Bluightagh* in Manx is milch cattle (Gaelic *bliochdach* = milk producing) and *vlieaun* is derived from *blieaun*, Manx = milking.

From this it would appear that both the marsh marygold and the primrose played a very interesting part in the observation and celebration of these festivities and that it was particularly applied to the milch kine—their chief wealth—and use to protect them from the evil influence of the fairies, evil spirits, and witches. The French custom above alluded to seems to explain the meaning of the Manx *bluight* or *bwillógh*, the *bluightagh vlieaun*, and the Irish *bainne bo bleacht*) Perhaps the Manx may also, like the Gallo-Celtic peasantry, have in times gone past rubbed and stroked the udders of their cows with marsh marygold, cowslip, and other yellow May flowers, in order to “ensure plenty of milk.”

The subject deserves the attention of your Insular readers. I should like them to add to this lore, and increase the store of information to throw more light on the beliefs and customs observed during these early stages of pastoral life.

[Several other contributions, which are in type, are unavoidably held over.—ED.]

Karl Roeder, “Manx Notes & Queries: No. 29,” *Isle of Man Examiner*, 23 November 1901, 7b. * Paragraphed here for clarity of reading.

[P17] W.Y. EVANS-WENTZ, *THE FAIRY FAITH IN CELTIC COUNTRIES* (1911)

[124] “On the 11th of May¹ we used to gather mountain-ash (*cuirn*) with red berries on it, and make crosses out of its sprigs, and put them over the doors, so that the fairies would not come in. My father always saw that this was done; he said we could have no luck during the year if we forgot to do it.”

¹ “May 11 = in Manx *Oie Voaldyn*, ‘May-day Eve.’ On this evening the fairies were supposed to be peculiarly active. To propitiate them and to ward off the influence of evil spirits, and

witches, who were also active at this time, green leaves or boughs and *sumark* or primrose flowers were strewn on the threshold, and branches of the *cuirn* or mountain ash made into small crosses without the aid of a knife, which was on no account to be used (steel or iron in any form being taboo to fairies and spirits), and stuck over the doors of the dwelling-houses and cow-houses. Cows were further protected from the same influences by having the *Bollan-feaill-Eoin* ('John's feast wort') placed in their stalls. This was also one of the occasions on which no one would give fire away, and on which fires were and are still lit on the hills to drive away the fairies."—SOPHIA MORRISON.

W.Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1911). See "Testimony of a Ballasalla Manxwoman," 123–24, in "The Taking of Evidence, IV: In the Isle of Man," 117–34.

[P18] JOSEPHINE KERMODE, "FOLKLORE NOTES," *MANNIN* I (1913)

"On the first of May the people would go before sunrise and scutch up the dew *surrupshus* [*ie*, surreptiously] from a neighbour's field and scatter it over their own for luck."

KIRK MAUGHOLD

Josephine Kermode, "Folklore Notes," *Mannin*, I (1913), 52.



NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS



[N1] “THE FAIRY NIGHT,” *MANKS ADVERTISER* (14 MAY 1833)

The eve of Old May day has, from time immemorial, been appropriated by the Manks people to the gambols and freaks of the Fairy tribe. Accordingly on Saturday night last many houses were duly fortified against their charms by sprinkling the thresholds with flowers, and other rites were observed with which we are but indifferently acquainted. The Elfin tribe, however, were by no means uproarious, indeed, we understand that but few of them appeared, being scared from their accustomed visits and pranks by that formidable nervous enemy the Influenza.

“The Fairy Night,” *Manks Advertiser*, 14 May 1833, 3b.

[N2] “[LOCAL INTELLIGENCE] ON THURSDAY LAST ...,” *MONA’S HERALD* (16 MAY 1837)

On Thursday last, (May eve) the usual custom in this Island, of setting fire to the whins, &c, for the purpose of “burning the witches and fairies,” was observed with due pomp, accompanied with the blowing of horns. The evening being mild, fires could be observed as far as the eye could reach, which had a curious effect after sunset. To the traveller it appeared singular in witnessing both old and young persons gathering peculiar herbs, and placing them at the doors, and about their dwellings, as a preventive to these “warlocks” entering the premises.

“[Local Intelligence] On Thursday last ...,” *Mona’s Herald*, 16 May 1837, [2]b.

[N3] “[LOCAL INTELLIGENCE] [TUESDAY LAST, ...],” *MONA’S HERALD* (7 MAY 1839)

Tuesday last, being May eve, according to custom the children of many of our poor population were to be seen busily employed in the fields, gathering primroses and other flowers, for the purpose of strewing the inside and outside of the doors of their respective dwellings; and in the evening, or rather at nightfall, “children of larger growth” were busily employed in firing gorse bushes, &c, upon the various hills throughout the country, for the purpose, as custom alleges, of frightening away the fairies! When will our countrymen see these delusive customs in their proper light, and cease to render them selves ridiculous in the eyes of rationally thinking-men?

“[Local Intelligence] [Tuesday last, ...],” *Mona’s Herald*, 7 May 1839, 3a.

[N4] "A RAMBLE ON MAY-EVE," MANX SUN (10 MAY 1839)

When lo, behold on every hill arose a fiery flame,
 Where'er we gazed on every side the eye beheld the same;
 And voices loud are heard around in cries of joyous scorn.
 And the night-bird is affrighted at the braying of the horn;

"A Ramble on May-Eve," Manx Sun, 10 May 1839, 2a. [Extract]

[N5] "VETUSTATIS AMATOR," "TO THE EDITOR OF THE MANX SUN," MANX SUN (15 MAY 1840)

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MANX SUN

SIR,—I heard some allusions lately made in ridicule of the practice in this Island of gathering flowers and kindling fires on the first day of May, and on the eve of St John the Baptist, and it would appear that the origin and object of these customs, if they have at this day any object, are not understood.

These rites are relics of very ancient customs among the heathen, who observed the four last days of April and the first of May in honour of the goddess Flora, esteemed as the deity presiding over fruits and flowers—all the writers of antiquity make mention of their uses and application in heathen and pagan ceremonies.

The custom of making fires is a religious ceremony which may be traced to and loses itself in remote antiquity. The author of the Manx Dictionary, a work that has done him infinite credit, has made a shrewd guess at the etymology of "Laa Boaldyn" (May-day:) he observes "some say it is derived from "Boal" (a wall,) and "Tien" (fire,) in reference to the practice of going round the walls or fences with fire on the eve of that day." But no such practice can be traced in this Island. Mr Cregeen refers to Ireland, the custom may be known in that country.

In the islandic language "Boal" signifies a "burning," and "Teine" "fire"—Boaldyn; and Mr Pennant tells us that on the first of May in the Highlands of Scotland, the herdsmen of every village hold their "Beltein"; the passage is too long to transcribe, but it appears to be a rural sacrifice consisting of fire, wood, and turf, on which they dress a caudle of eggs, butter, milk, &c; spilling some of it on the ground by way of libation. Gebelin, in his *Allegories Orientales*, says "these fires were sacred fires kindled about midnight; a religious ceremony which was observed for the prosperity of states and people, and to dispel every evil." A more modern author, however, thinks the origin of this fire very simple, it was accompanied with vows and sacrifices for the prosperity of the people, and the fruits of the earth, and was a fire of joy kindled the very moment the year began, for the first of all years, and the most ancient that we know of began about the month of June.

A superstitious faith must be supposed to be the origin of these ceremonies, and though in former times riot and debauchery may have attended their celebration, yet now they are innocent pastimes of the people, and merit respect rather than ridicule.

Yours, &c,
VETUSTATIS AMATOR.

Pseud [signed as "Vetustatis Amator"], "[Letter to the Editor] To the Editor of the Manx Sun," *Manx Sun*, 15 May 1840, 4b.

[N6] "THE WEATHER, SUN-SPOTS, CROPS, PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY, AND RELIGION,"
MONA'S HERALD (16 JUNE 1847)

[8c] The fires which are still kindled on our surrounding mountains at May day, were first instituted as incense-offerings to the sun, to greet him on his return to shine in the brightest of his strength through the approaching summer. These eternal principles deeply laid in nature, are not easily eradicated from the human breast; hence it is nowise strange that Manxmen, as well as most nations of the earth, should retain shreds of natural religion, which once prevailed over the whole face of the earth.

"The Weather, Sun-Spots, Crops, Philosophy, History, and Religion,"
Mona's Herald, 16 June 1847, 8b–c. [Extract]

[N7] "MAY EVE," MONA'S HERALD (18 MAY 1853)

Last Wednesday evening was May Eve, old style, and never have we seen it celebrated with half the Druidical grandeur as on this occasion. The evening was delightfully clear and calm. The winds were hushed to gentle zephyrs. A crescent moon, bright as burnished silver hung in the west, about one-and-a-half hours from the horizon. The sweet little stars twinkled in the azure vault of heaven, like brilliant pearls in the blue ocean. The sea was calm and placid as a mirror; and all nature seemed to hold its breath, while the ancient worship of Mona was performing. We look our stand in a position where we could take in the whole mountain range from Mull Hill to North Barrule. The undulations and waving lines of the mountains and glens were beautifully drawn on a clear sky; and although

"Twas distance lent enchantment to the view,

And robed the mountains in an azure hue;

yet by perspective, and the aid of imagination, you could grasp the whole, and gather them into one magnificent panorama. Mona in all her diversity of hill and dale, deep gorges and craggy breaks, never appeared more lovely. Indeed, she had dressed herself out on this particular occasion to be "the Queen of the May." And now the clock strikes nine! 'Tis the hour for evening vespers: the twilight recedes; and see! what a blazing glory bursts upon the view from the whole mountain range! More than 500 fires are lighted up as with the touch of an enchantress' wand. Mountain brow and sequestered glen—hill tops and cairns, and the tombs of the ancient sleepers are made luminous and glorious by the blazing lights! These lights vary as much in magnitude and scope as in position. Some are high up the mount—

others down in the vale. Some are waving like a sea of glory and spread over a vast space—other some are like little gems or the fixed stars, gilding but a little spot, but with ardent intensity. Indeed, we compared the whole as no unfit emblem of the heavenly bodies blazing in the firmament—varying in distance and magnitude, but forming altogether a magnificent whole.

But what do we see holding and swelling up from the strand near Fleshwick Bay? It is a dense solemn pillar of smoke half a mile in circumference. It stands bolt upright like a prop of the universe, and stretches up from its base four miles into mid air. This was the grand masterly display of the whole exhibition, You could but think it was a cloudy symbol of the dark and mysterious worship of the Druids. It concealed in its bosom and hid behind its column that dim and wondrous imagery of unrevealed glory and majesty belonging to the unknown God; and from out the shadowy movings and evolvings of this cloudy pillar there seemed to issue a voice, declaring to the dark sons of nature without revelation—“God maketh darkness his pavilion, and covers himself with a cloud!” But look again! this dark cloudy pillar is gilded and streaked with red! Light shines upon its mysterious bosom, and a flame of glory bursts up from his base, and illumines the ascending shaft toward the heavens!

What a glorious symbol have we here! Druidism was the dark cloudy pillar. Its shadowy forms and mysterious voices were the blind longings and reachings of the soul after God and immortality, without the aid of revelation. But Jesus spake to this involved and mystic chaos, and said, “Let there be light!” and quick as the lightning's touch, “there was light,” and the cloudy pillar was irradiated with the beams of the Son of God.

Though Druidical worship as a whole is extinct; yet this observance of the Manx is proof positive that the Druids once flourished here, and left this as an abiding anniversary. It is called *Laa Boaldyn*, words whose etymology has puzzled Cregeen and Train, they knowing nothing what to make of them. We think there is no difficulty whatever in the case. *Laa* in Manx means day; *Boal* is the broad sound of Baal, or the god Bel, whose altars blazed with fire in Old Testament times; *dyn* is the Scandinavian spelling of the Erse word *teine*, which means fire, and the whole words taken together mean “The day of Baal's fire.” The Gaelic has it *Beltein* (that is, the fire of Bel). But as Baal and Bel are one and the same god, *Laa Boaldyn* is equally expressive.

But there is a curious piece of learning connected with the object or design of this observance as still kept up by the Manx. Allow us kind reader to open this seal for thine instruction and refreshment. Go to any of the ancient crons of the glen or the aged pilgrims still leaning upon their staves among us, as we oft have been, and ask them why these fires are lighted, and they will invariably tell you “to frighten off the witches.” This opens up to us a great historic fact in the matter of human worship.

Pagan worship anciently, and even to this day, consisted of two parts, viz., reverence and devotion to the good deities, and propitiation and exorcism toward the

bad deities. Druidism itself propitiated the evil genii, as well as sacrificed to the heller god. Now, then, the light of revelation has taught the Manxman that the higher reverence and devotion must be paid to God alone. He has learned that, “the Lord thy God is one Lord, and him only shall thou serve,” but the Druidical superstition still clinging to him, he offers up these fires in the second kind of Pagan worship, viz., to expel the evil influence from sea and land. Namely, that while he prays and sings praises to God, he frightens off the witches by blazing fires.

But quoth the reader, why is the horn sounded over mountain and glen on this occasion? Why, simply, to let the witches, elfins, and phynodderies plainly understand, that the Manx are a very brave and heroic people, and will assemble their tribes by sound of horn, to do battle on the worst hobgoblins infesting the country.

But again you ask us, why that floral charm of May flowers, butter-cups, and so forth, about the cottage doors? This is nothing more nor less than a kindly politeness of the Manx toward the little ladies called the fairies, who are expected to cross the threshold or pass through the key hole about midnight of May Eve, to renew summer acquaintanceship with the family. Formerly some good things used to be left on the table for the fairy supper; but we regret to say the hospitality is now becoming rare, and the effect has been to affront the fairies, and drive them from our shores.

Upon the whole, we like these fires, and horns, and flowers, and fairy charms. They carry the mind back into the dim shadows of antiquity, throw a flood of light on ancient history, and do no harm to those who have sense enough to know that they are but the vestiges of an ancient superstition.

“May Eve,” *Mona’s Herald*, 18 May 1853, 3c.

[N8] “[RAMSEY AND THE NORTH] OLD MAY EVE,” *MONA’S HERALD* (17 MAY 1854)

On the evening of the 11th (May Eve old style), many an old witch underwent the extreme penalty of lynch-law—by the burning of the gorse-bushes supposed to be their retreat. On the high lands of Maughold, where “Bogganes,” “Butcheragh,” and “Farsihen” is still part of the creed. The fires uprose with great brilliancy, and presented to the eye of the observer standing on the rising suburbs of Ramsey a spectacle of awful grandeur—reflecting a luminous glare for miles around. Anxious as we are to see an end to all superstition, and to see every fragment and relic of barbarism swept into the Lethan Abyss, yet we feel some sort of respect for a ritual which presents such imposing demonstrations.

“[Ramsey and the North] Old May Eve,” *Mona’s Herald*, 17 May 1854, 3c.

[N9] ELIZABETH COOKSON, “SPRING,” *MANX SUN* (8 MAY 1858)

See the wizard-haunted Broom,*
(Beaten, trodden—no more dreading

Winter wind, and lash, and gloom,)

All her golden treasure spreading.

* From ages immemorial the Manx peasantry have burned their whin bushes on May day, conceiving they therewith consumed the wizards and witches that they used to believe took refuge in them.

Elizabeth Cookson, “[Poetry] *Spring*,” *Manx Sun*, 8 May 1858, 2a. [Extract]

[NIO] “[LOCAL NEWS] BELTHEINE,” *MANX SUN* (30 APRIL 1859)

As this day happens to be the last of April, such of our readers as may have but recently become residents in this Island will thank us for giving them information of an insular custom of equal singularity and antiquity. On May eve (this evening) the hills everywhere around us will be enveloped in the flames of burning gorse and furze bushes, called in the native vernacular BELTHEINE, or Baaltheine—meaning Bel’s or Baal’s fire. The custom is obviously of heathen origin, and has reference to the sacrificial rites devoted to the great Pagan deity, so solemnly anathematized in the Holy Scriptures by name, and his worshippers therein doomed to destruction. Those who light the fires, as well as those who permit the conflagration on the enclosed lands as well as the commons of the Island, little dream that the orgies they aid in celebrating are of heathen if not of actual demoniac; origin. Nevertheless, harmless as is the intention, it would be as well to relinquish the custom. Another most ancient custom is, to place flowers and certain herbs above, below, and around the threshold of each house on the 1st of May, to curry favour with, and deprecate the enmity of, that now expatriated race, the *Dhooiney Shie*, or “Men of pence”—in other words, the much-maligned FAIRIES.

“[Local News] Beltheine,” *Manx Sun*, 30 April 1859, 4c.

[NII] G. H—, “THE MOUNTAINS ARE CALLING,” *MANX SUN* (7 MAY 1859)

THE MOUNTAINS ARE CALLING

The mountains are calling! the hills are awake!
As giants arousing from slumber, they shake
The mists from their shoulders that wrap them by night.
And glow in the sunshine all crimson and white!

The mountains are calling! hark, hark to the breeze
That sweeps from their summits and sings in the trees!
It bids us away to their health-giving heights,
And gaze on a thousand magnificent sights!

The mountains are calling! they bid us behold

Afar, like a broad sheet of silver unroll'd,
 The mystical ocean, awaking from sleep,
 And listen its murmurs, so hoarse and so deep!

The mountains are calling! from lofty Snafell—
 From the peaks of Barule their glad voices swell;
 They bid us arise—be lethargic no more—
 That summer approaches and winter is o'er.

The mountains are calling! the cuckoo's wild note
 From dell and from dingle re-echoes remote;
 The lark is aloft on his dew-spangled wing;
 And valley and glen with sweet harmonies ring!

The mountains are calling! away let us go!
 The *Beltane* to-night on their summits shall glow!
 The demons that haunt them we'll give to the fire,
 While Darkness and Winter together expire!

Douglas, Isle of Man, April 30th

G. H—, “[Poetry] The Mountains are Calling,” *Manx Sun*, 7 May 1859,
 2a.

[NI2] “ANCIENT MANX TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS—THEIR GRADUAL DECAY,
 DEGENERACY, AND ULTIMATE ABUSE,” *MANX SUN* (17 MARCH 1860)

[4a] Talking the other day, of old times and old customs with an early friend and fellow islesman (both having seen somewhat more of the world than stands between the limits of the Point of Ayre and Spanish Head) we were rather startled by his enunciating *ore rotunda*, “There is no use discussing the matter further, I do not think there is a single intelligent individual among us Manxmen that will not agree with me in opinion, that every one of our existing insular and traditional customary nonsensicalities ought to put down by the strong hand of the law as pestilent nuisances, from the ‘Hop-y-Naa’ of Hollantide Eve, to the ‘Quaaltrough’ of the first day of the New Year, or rather the midnight of the defunct one, and, so on, from January to December, *in sacula seculorum*.”

There is a good deal of truth in this dictum, or, as it was put, dogma, of our travelled countryman; but let us, for mutual benefit, test it by reminiscences of former days; and, should our personal memory of these (to us, we confess, fondly loved) recollections of childhood be at fault, no doubt, some of our readers of equal date and of old Manx kindly brotherly feeling will set us right.

We shall state the case broadly, and as England's unmatched poet has it, "nothing extenuate, nor ought set down in malice;" though fearing, greatly fearing, however, that our brother Douglas men (those of equal date we mean) will coincide at once, in the bold condemnation of our friend (who happens to be a Douglas man too). We have a weakness (if we have one at all) for old things, old fancies, old memories, and old traditions, and we revolt against the rough-shod, pretended (because unproved) wisdom of these "days of progress," which cries "*delenda est Carthago*," without anything to assail the walls thereof save tempting money bags, cotton bales, or other omnium gatherum. We shall therefore call upon the "memories of half-forgotten days," to aid us in the "pursuit of knowledge under difficulties."

To begin then, as nursery tales have it.—In our young days—when old "Lilly Murray" was a dread, and still older Mr "Richard Snary" was an awful horror to juvenile stupids—our earliest Island recollections run back to the (still annually recurring) May fires on the mountain tops—the "Baal-yn-tein." In other words the fire in honour of the god Baal. How many epochs, how many thousands of years do not those fires evoke—that fire-god whom Zoroaster invoked, in his all but inspired philosophy (when Holy Scripture itself had not been revealed by the MESSIAH to the chosen of God) as the symbol of the pure and illimitable Deity? Well, that flight is beyond our present inquiry; we believe in the "Baal-yn-tien" as little as the islesmen who follow the fifty or five hundred superstitions connected with it. Still it exists—it is untrue,—but still it proves, for thousands of years, the antiquity of the time-battered and time-defaced Celtic race—yet there it is, and next May will burn as merrily as ever; and will be helped and aided until late hours by young men and young women; aye, and by boys and girls, whose parents cannot possibly care about their present or future welfare, or they would never permit their presence at the inevitable obscenities of the unholy "Baal-yn-tien."

It is impossible to defend *this* traditional custom, and we join our friend in saying "*Delenda!*" to this iniquity. But the question arises—the possible results of these midnight meetings?—who is to pay for their possible consequences? On this point, we confess our friend has us at advantage, and we "surrender at discretion."

Let us try another. It smacks of early Christendom, long before Catholics or any other Christians thought of persecuting or killing each other in the name of that GREAT GOD, whose fiat was pronounced amid the thunders of Mount Sinai—"Thou shalt do no murder!"

Well, when we were in early childhood, we can well recollect witnessing and enjoying, too, at the commencement of May, the sight of troops of young, pretty, and modest girls, neatly dressed in white, and bedecked with gay ribbons, and yet gayer garlands and natural or artificial flowers, perambulating the streets of Douglas, under the guidance of a chosen leader, who was hailed by her companions, and, without fail, bowed to and greeted by all passers-by, as the "Queen of May." She was

sometimes the daughter of a humble labourer, sometimes of a respectable mechanic, sometimes of a high-class shopkeeper, sometimes of a private gentleman, (native or stranger), but always one, whom, as “Queen of May,” no one, at peril of his limbs, dare insult, and to whom the then High-bailiff (Mr. Thomas Gawne, afterwards Deemster) always “doffed his tye,” and made his humblest and singularly graceful bow. The old gentleman is gone to his account, as we must all go, but whatever charges the attorney-general for the Potentate in Black may allege against him at that Bar, he cannot possibly include among them “forgetfulness of the Queen of May.”

This scene, if our memory prove not treacherous, annually recurred on the 12th May, or the anniversary of Old May Day.

On the same day bands of grown-up boys—the male sex exclusively—all of them, however, of honest parentage (without reference to rank), and well conducted, were also accustomed to parade the thoroughfares of Douglas. But they were in very different guise from that of their feminine compatriots. These grim ones marched with dishevelled hair, with faces uncouthly disfigured as if from exposure to excessive cold, and clad in wintry garb, under the command of a potential personage, bearing the dreary title of “The King of Winter.” We had forgotten to say that each of these potentialities—“The Queen of May,” and “The King of Winter,” had a band of music parading before them, and, whenever they met, (as they frequently did) the monarch who did the dismal on the occasion, was bound to doff his grim crown, lower his sceptre, and bend his knee to “The Queen of May.” A ceremony which he not only did, but obsequiously sought out occasions for so doing. A word to the wise—the Queen and the King not unfrequently [4c] did the matrimonial before the rev. vicar of Braddan.

These were innocent pastimes, the origin of which has been long lost in the mists of forgotten antiquity; yet, considerably within the last half century, they were blooming as in their pristine years. Modern “progress” interfered, “vice” followed in its footsteps, and away went the “Merry May-Sport” out of the path of either for ever. The stain of earthly sensuality soiled its “Queen,” and, from that moment, the sportive pastime of May, despoiled of the harmlessness to which our early memory reverts, rushed from old Ellan Vannin without leaving a trace of its whereabouts, save in the dim recollection of some quaint old folk, who, like ourselves, are inclined to believe that the world, instead of being better, is a great deal worse than it was fifty years ago.

We fear that our cynical friend, and a good many more of our readers whose “thronging memories” rush back to these days of “auld lang syne,” will, so far as we have touched upon them, agree in opinion. Possibly next week we may touch upon a few more of these old world affairs, and, after doing so, we shall be in some tribulation lest our honest verdict with respect to them (as they are *now*, but not as they were *then*) will also be *Delenda est Carthago*.

“Ancient Manx Traditional Customs—Their Gradual Decay, Degeneracy, and Ultimate Abuse,” *Manx Sun*, 17 March 1860, 4b–c.

[N13] “[RAMSEY AND THE NORTH] WITCHCRAFT IN BALLAUGH,” ISLE OF MAN TIMES (20 MAY 1871)

We had been long labouring under the impression that the belief in witchcraft and its concomitant, the “evil eye,” was a thing of the past—at any rate in this little island. But that this impression was fallacious, the following instance of gross superstition in Ballaugh parish will show; indeed, the case is worthy of the darkest of the so-called “dark ages.” It appears that a well-to-do farmer, who owns and farms a part of a certain quarterland in the parish of Ballaugh, some eight months ago, or rather better, lost a valuable sow. He could not account for the cause of death, and, therefore, ascribed it to butcheragh, or witchcraft. He buried the body where it would not be disturbed until he should again require it, in order to counteract the malignant influence of the “evil eye,” and so render it innocuous to the remainder of his stock and family. Accordingly, on old May eve, the 11th inst, he exhumed the putrid carcase with his own hands, and divided it into several pieces (into how many we are unable to say, but we opine the number of pieces had something to do with the efficacy of the charm; “There’s luck in odd numbers,” so we suppose he chose some mystical odd number). The pieces were put into a huge boiler, in a field adjoining the house, that had formerly been used for steaming turnips, but, being cracked, was fit for no other purpose but the present one. A quantity of fuel was placed under, over, and around the boiler, and then fire was applied to it, to “burn out the witch”—that is, to expel her from the premises. The vulgar idea is that, while this burnt-offering is blazing, the witch, or the possessor of the “evil eye,” who has butched the person, or chattel, is sure to make his or her appearance on the scene; and, through some metaphysical affinity between the burning carcase and the witch, the latter suffers all the torments of the damned while the fire continues to burn, until the whole carcase is consumed. We do not know what the incantations used on this occasion were, nor whether they were addressed to the Prince of Darkness or to Jehovah. Be that as it may, while the filthy mass of putrefaction was seething, or, strictly speaking, calcining, in the cauldron, and when the fire had almost reached its height, three persons made their appearance on the stage. They were, however, very unlike the three old hags who met Macbeth. They were not all females, nor had they long grizzled beards, and they were not mounted on broomsticks. There was nothing frightful in their appearance. On the contrary, the first who made their appearance was a man and his wife, who came in a spring cart, in quest of market stuff. The man is a butcher belonging to the parish, and he and his wife would not feel complimented by being suspected of butcheragh. The last comer was a jolly rubicund-visaged farmer, the next neighbour to the principal actor in this strange performance, who, feeling a most unearthly stench borne on the breeze from his

neighbour's homestead, and seeing a great conflagration close to it, imagined that all was not right there, and so had hastened to render whatever assistance might be required. Our witch-doctor's thumbs, no doubt, warned hint of then approach; for

By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.

He cast suspicious glances upon them, although there was apparently nothing very wicked about them. On the contrary, their intents were lawful and charitable. He observed a strict silence, however, as to the reason of his strange conduct, being convinced that they felt the effects of it in their own persons; and shortly retired to his domicile, perfectly satisfied that he had scotched the snake which had bitten him. For obvious reasons we suppress the names of all the parties, but the account is strictly correct. They are facts, however strange they may appear and, as facts, they require at present no comment. We recommend them to the consideration of the opponents of the insular Education Bill.

[Ramsey and the North] Witchcraft in Ballaugh," *Isle of Man Times*, 20 May 1871, 5c.

[NI4] "AMONG THE MANX MEN: NO. 1," ISLE OF MAN TIMES (27 JULY 1872)

[6e] Probably in no part of the British Islands are old customs and superstitious so commonly retained as here; indeed they have this proverb, "If custom be not followed custom will weep." I will notice a few connected with plants. Primroses, Buttercups, and Lent Lilies are placed before the house door on May day to exclude the fairies.

"Among the Manx Men: No. 1," *Isle of Man Times*, 27 July 1872, 6e–f. Notes: (1) "Lent Lilies" are also known as Wild Daffodils, *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*. (2) Piece reproduced from the *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener*. (3) [6e] "As they differ from us Englishers in these zoological productions, so do these Manx men differ from us in many of their customs—customs of bygone ages linger here."

[NI5] "BALTANE," MANX SUN (6 MAY 1876)

The first of May is called in Gaelic La Baal Tinn—the Day of Baal's Fire—and in very recent times great fires used to be lighted on the headlands and other prominent parts of the Island on May Eve; flowers, also, were laid on the door-step of the houses before the inmates retired to rest. Of late years both customs have declined, and this year, for the first time, both seem to have disappeared,—at any rate on this side of the Island. An older custom, that of crowning the May Queen, we never remember to have seen, though we have frequently taken part in both the others. In many neighbouring towns in England a procession of horses decked with gay ribbons now takes the place of the May Queen. A flower festival, such as that given by Miss

Wood's class at Peel, might, we think, with advantage be substituted for our lapsed May-Day festivities.

“Baltane,” *Manx Sun*, 6 May 1876, 4c.

[N16] J.M. C—, “[LETTER TO THE EDITOR] MANXMEN ABOARD,” *MONA'S HERALD* (11 MAY 1881)

I didn't know much about *sourying* in those days, but I have heard that the like was done, and I wouldn't wonder, for when I have come in from watching the fire on the mountains in those May days, and when I was really tired enough to go to bed some neighbour boys a good deal bigger than me would be up still. Perhaps, though, they were only going to the gibbins on the Jurby shore.

J.M. C—, “[Letter to the Editor] Manxmen Aboard,” *Mona's Herald*, 11 May 1881, 3f.

[N17] “[PEEL AND THE WEST] MAY DAY FIRES,” *MONA'S HERALD* (4 MAY 1887)

The 1st of May this year falling on Sunday, the usual custom of firing the bushes was observed about here on Saturday, when the unfortunate birds had a rather hot time, the bushes being all ablaze along the mountain sides. The custom of firing the bushes at this particular period is of very remote origin. Amongst the Gaels of Scotland it is termed “beltane,” and by such name was it observed by the Druids; being even said to be in commemoration of the sacrificial fires of “Baal,” hence the term “beltane.” In the Isle of Man the custom was supposed for ages effectual in purging out witches, which were said to take refuge in gorse bushes, but though it is an annual observance the origin and purpose is lost in the mists of oblivion.

“[Peel and the West] May Day Fires,” *Mona's Herald*, 4 May 1887, 5g.

[N18] REV. E.B. SAVAGE, “THE SUN WORSHIP OF THE ANCIENT CELTS: AND ITS PRESENT SURVIVAL IN THE ISLE OF MANN,” *ISLE OF MAN TIMES* (29 MAY 1889)

[3d] Now, let us go forward six months, to another great day. May Day, kept, like the former festival, according to the old style, on the 12th of the month; again a Saints' Day in the Christian calendar, dedicated to Saints Philip and James. This also is a time when fairies and all the spirits of mischief are abroad. I have myself seen the yellow flowers of the water ranunculus [*ie*, Buttercups] scattered before the cottage doors on the evening of the 11th; branches of Curn, or mountain ash, are placed over the doors of the cowhouses and stables; a small cross of corn is worn in the hat or placed in cows' tails, to keep off the evil spirits; for those spirits again are abroad, the sun is asserting his strength below the horizon, among the spirits of darkness; he is overcoming the powers of evil; and this night, the eve of the first day of summer, they flee from his presence. They are to be feared in their wrath and despair at being

thus vanquished, and put to flight, by their enemy, whom, six months before, they had overpowered; so that special care must be taken to ward them off from house and barn, and thus force them to their old and less harmful haunts in the streams and mountains, to which the sun can now drive them by reason of his growing power. This evening is also a favourite time for forecasting the future, on account of the general activity that then prevails in the spirit world.

Rev. E.B. Savage, "The Sun Worship of the Ancient Celts: and its present survival in the Isle of Mann," *Isle of Man Times*, 29 May 1889, 3d–f.

[N19] "[FISHING AND SHIPPING] THE IRISH MACKEREL FISHERY," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (4 MAY 1895)

[5g] Had you been on Kinsale Pier to-night, you would have seen great flaring of torches, and heard most excruciating sounds from fog horns and guns, with a few melodians and concertinas thrown in. This was kept up for over an hour, starting about eight o'clock. Many people rushed to the pier wondering what it was all about; and an old Manxman aboard one of the boats at the quay was asked the meaning of the strange freak on the part of the fishermen, to which he gave the reply, rather scornfully, we thought—"Don't yer know? Well 'is burn the witch night!" And so the youthful portion of the Manx fleet kept the old custom alive up here, and although they were not able to burn the witch by setting fire to beautiful gorse and heather (and thus destroy some charming bits of country scenery in the spring time), we opine that if there were any "witches" round here tonight, they would be certainly frightened away by the hideous yells emanating from the fog horns, concertinas, melodians, bells, whistles, and other instruments of music which were operated upon.

"[Fishing and Shipping] The Irish Mackerel Fishery," *Isle of Man Examiner*, 4 May 1895, 5h–g.

[N20] "WELCOME, MAY!" MONA'S HERALD (4 MAY 1898)

The ceremony of bringing home the maypole and crowning the May Queen never took root in the Isle of Man. But we were not without our quaint, though perhaps superstitious, ceremonies at this season of the year. On May Eve it was always customary to go to the woodland and gather sprigs of the rowan-tree or mountain ash. These were brought home, bound in the form of a cross, and placed over the door to prevent the intrusion of "witches." On this night, too, the young men and boys had an important duty to perform. This was to light fires on the mountain sides and in the glens to scare away the self-same "witches." A generation ago, in many parts of the Island, "burn the witch night" was a more important night, in the eyes of the mob beg than that, of Guy Faulkes himself. On Saturday night last we failed to

see the fires, but this was owing to the heavy rainfall, as the custom has not yet totally died out in some of the country districts.

*

Our Manx May Eve customs savour too much of a superstitious age, and as such are unworthy of continuance.

“Welcome, May!” *Mona’s Herald*, 4 May 1898, 6f.

[N21] “[NEWS SUMMARY] A STORY COMES ...,” *ISLE OF MAN TIMES* (21 MAY 1898)

A story comes from Peel which shows that the hoary superstition of “burning the witch out” is not yet dead. There is a certain small fishing boat or “nobbie” which has had nothing but ill-luck since the day she was launched. Recently the vessel was undergoing her yearly overhaul. The unlucky character of the vessel came under review at the same time as her dingy paint. A meeting of the crew was held, and it was solemnly decided that the boat had been “took,” and that the witch most be burnt out. Accordingly the next day a large fire was made in the hold of the vessel and kept going merrily all day, by which time it was hoped that the witch or “buggane” or fairy had disappeared. The interest of the affair is that it is one of the very few survivals of a belief that was once universal all over Europe. In the British Islands there is no doubt the superstition lingers most strongly amongst the Celtic peoples of Ireland and Scotland and,—perhaps, we may add, of the Isle of Man. It is curious to remark that, although the crew of this little boat deliberately decided to burn out the witch, they were ashamed of their act, and denied it when asked about it.

“[News Summary] A story comes ...”, *Isle of Man Times*, 21 May 1898, 4c.

[N22] “YESTERDAY WAS MAY-DAY ...,” *MONA’S HERALD* (2 MAY 1900)

Yesterday was May-day, but there was nothing to distinguish it from ordinary days. [...] The old Manx May-day customs are rapidly dying out; even the boys now neglect “to burn the witch” on the eve of May-day.

“Yesterday was May-day ...,” *Mona’s Herald*, 2 May 1900, 6c.

[N23] “[THE OLD CUSTOM ...],” *PEEL CITY GUARDIAN* (5 MAY 1900)

The old custom of “burning the witch” was observed by the youth of Peel on May Day eve, when a large area of the gorse and pasturage on Peel Hill was set on fire. The old custom may appeal to some people of sentimental turn, but when it takes form in destroying the beautiful heather on Peel Hill—one of the glories of our western town—it is time to end such vandalism.

“[The old custom ...],” *Peel City Guardian*, 5 May 1900, [2]d.

[N24] “OLD MAY-DAY EVE,” MANX SUN (13 MAY 1905)

An old lady once told the writer that she had fastened a little “cuirn” cross in the rough hair at the tip of the tail of a cow, on May-eve, and she declared that she had never had better luck with that the cattle that year.

*

At the present time it is quite common to see conflagrations of gorse not only on the mountains, but on the hedges. It is thought that the burning of gorse has a purifying influence; even a handful of gorse burnt in a field is expected to do its work successfully, and the flocks of sheep and cattle over which the smoke passes are all the better.

“Old May-Day Eve,” *Manx Sun*, 13 May 1905, 5g.

[N25] “UNCLE JACK,” “OUR CHILDREN’S COLUMN,” ISLE OF MAN WEEKLY TIMES (1 MAY 1909)

[11a] Do you know that our Manx forefathers plentifully strewed the thresholds of their cottage doors with primroses, buttercups and other wild flowers on May-eve to prevent the intrusion of the fairies on that night? I can well remember, when I was a boy, seeing some cottage door steps thus be-decked with flowers. But the floral charm was, at that time, continued more for the amusement of the children than from superstition. On the same evening we used to make a cross of “kern”—the rowan tree or mountain-ash—and fix it behind the front-door. This also was to keep out the fairies. I made many a cross of mountain ash, not that I believed in fairies, but to keep up the old custom.

*

[11a] There was another old custom practised on May-eve which has not yet quite died out. Men and boys congregated on the mountains, and in order to scare the witches and fairies, supposed to be roaming abroad on that night in numbers greater than ordinarily, they set fire to the dry heather and gorse, to a noisy accompaniment on cow-horns.

*

[11a] I am waiting this at the beginning of the week, but I guarantee that if the heather and gorse are perfectly dry on May-eve (Friday night) you will see fires on some of the Manx mountains. Old superstitions die hard.

“Uncle Jack,” “Our Children’s Column,” *Isle of Man Weekly Times*, 1 May 1909, 11a–c.

[N26] “PEEL 50 YEARS AGO,” PEEL CITY GUARDIAN (9 MAY 1936)

Yesterday week being “Burn the Witch Night” the time honoured custom of kindling fires on the hill was most enthusiastically kept up by the youths of the town,

while many of the older heads did not fail to hang on the inside of their doors a cross or mountain ash (Crosh Keirn) the never failing talisman against witch intrusion.

“Peel 50 Years Ago,” *Peel City Guardian*, 9 May 1936, 8a. Taken from 1886 original not seen due to gap in holdings of the newspaper by the MNHL.

[N27] “[PEEL AFFAIRS] [POORTOWN RAILWAY STATION ...],” *ISLE OF MAN WEEKLY TIMES* (6 MAY 1939)

Poortown Railway Station was raided during the past week-end—not for anything inside the station, but for sprigs of mountain ash. For years this has been going on so that a cross of this old tree could be placed behind the door of every house on May eve along with some primroses. Many people from Peel went specially to Poortown on Sunday to get some mountain ash, and the tree was as usual well stripped. So much for old Manx customs.

“[Peel Affairs] [Poortown Railway Station ...],” *Isle of Man Weekly Times*, 6 May 1939, 9b.

[N28] “GAELK AS BAARLE (MANX AND ENGLISH),” *PEEL CITY GUARDIAN* (13 MAY 1950)

Row shiu mooie geddyn yn keirn (Row shoo moo-ee geddin in kern)

Were you out getting the mountain ash.

Va mee (vay me) I was.

Shegin dou jannoo chrosh (shy-in dhow jan noo chrosh jay)

I must make a cross of it.

Hooar me ollan dy Chiangley eh (hoo-ar me ollan air kane-la eh)

I got wool to tie it.

Ta mee goll dir cur eh er-cooil yn dorrys (tay me goll dir cur eh ir-cooil in dorris) I am going to put it behind the door.

Te sheen cliaghtey son laa-voaldyn (tey she in kl-agh-tir son lay vawl-din)

It is an old custom for May Day.

Dy freayll ny moojnjer-veggey ersooyl (dir frail nir moo in jer vegg-ir er sool)

To keep the little ones away.

“Gaelk as Baarle (Manx and English),” *Peel City Guardian*, 13 May 1950, 1b.

[N29] “MANX TOUR ON THE BBC,” ISLE OF MAN TIMES (6 DECEMBER 1954)

Mr Edward Maddrell talked with Mr Qualtrough in Manx, and Mr John Gawne, in his delightful natural way, told them of the great days of the fishing industry at Port St Mary and Peel, and recalled an incident when the crew of a fishing boat went round the boat with a torch “burning the witch.”

“Manx Tour on the BBC,” *Isle of Man Times*, 6 December 1954, 11c.



MANUSCRIPTS

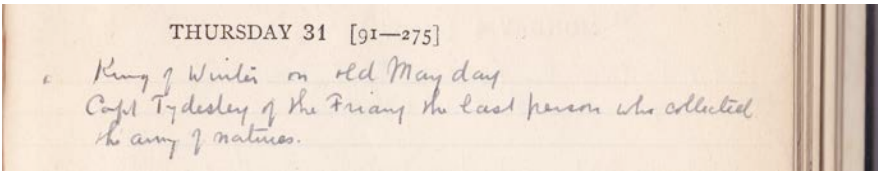
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DR JOHN CLAUGE
MANX FOLK LORE
(MNHL MS 952 A)

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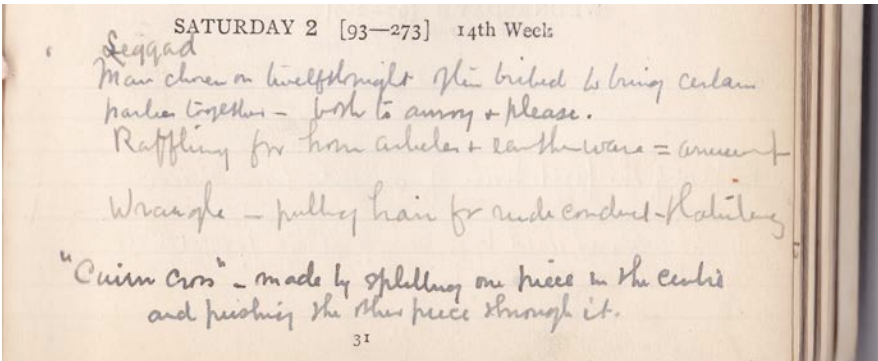
[MSI] DR JOHN CLAGUE, MANX FOLK LORE (MNHL MS 952 A)

[MSI.1]



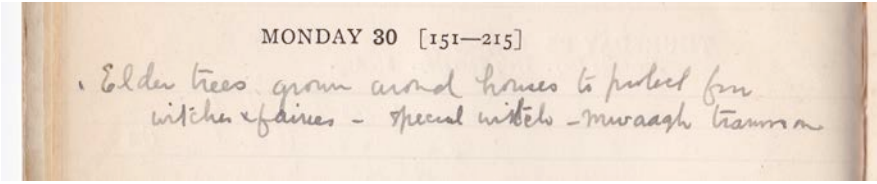
King of Winter on old May day
Capt Tydesley of the Friary the last person who collected
the army of natures [i.e. those making up Winter and Summer-ED.]

[MSI.2]



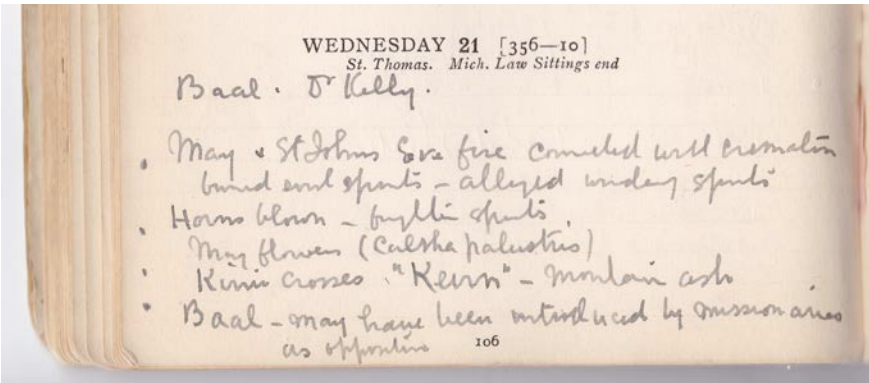
"Cuirn cross"—made by splitting one piece in the centre
and pushing the other piece through it.

[MSI.3]



Elder trees grown round houses to protect from
witches & fairies—special witch—mwaagh trammon

[MSI.4]



Baal. Dr Kelly.
May & St Johns Eve fire connected with cremation
buried and spirits—alleged wandering spirits
Horns blown—frighten spirits
May flowers (*Caltha palustris*)
Kirrin crosses "Keirn"—mountain ash
Baal—may have been introduced by missionaries
as opposition

"Manx Folk Lore." Notebook compiled by Dr John Clague, undated [1892 or after], MNHL, MS 952 A. Material found on the following pages of the diary (referenced using the printed page numbers), [MSI.1], [MSI.2] 31; [MSI.3] 48; [MSI.4] 106.



BOOK OF PRESENTMENTS



1723

[PR1] RUSHEN PRESENTMENTS (27 October 1723)

John Keggeen, upon complaint of Elizabeth Maddrel, presents Jony Cain for saying that the s^d Maddrell's and Balla-How's families, w^{ch} the Boat's Crew were the Devil's, & for praying to God that she might see the Hides of their Cattle asunning before May-Day.

To be sum^{on}'d before y^e Reg^r & return to be made.

Reconciled.

1730

[PR2] MICHAEL PRESENTMENTS (24 May 1730)

Bahee Kaighin for Sorcery upon common fframe

The Matter has been examined into, & Orders given therein.

[PR2.I] MICHAEL PRESENTMENTS (13 June 1730)

KK Michael

Patr: Corlet having reported y^t he saw Bahee the wife of John Kaighin of Skaristal, on may day early in the morning, in the fields, & about the houses, of her neighb^{rs} in a suspicious manner, as if she were practicing charms or sorcery, from w^{ch} has conceivd an evil opinion in that neighb^rhood, w^{ch} soon grew into a common fframe thro the parish of her being guilty of sorcery, and presentm^t thereof made, the s^d Bahee Kaighin & neighb^{rs} were this day convend before us, when, after Examination into the matter, there appeard no oth^r cause or ground for [such a] charge but the s^d Report of Patr: Corlet; Whereupon all parties, excepting Mary Gawn, being present, the s^d Bahee was admitted to her oath, who declard y^t she was not that morning off their own Land, and that she never endeavourd to procure advantage to herself or harm to her neighb^{rs} by any Underhand means or practising charms or sorcery, or knew any thing of such skill.

And the s^d Patrick Corlet having also askd forgiveness of her, [upon his knees wch being granted & the said parties reconcild in C^{rt}] It is therefore hereby orderd y^t no person presume to revive the s^d Slander, to the Scandal and reproach of the above Bahee Kaighin or her Relations, under the severest penalties, according to Law & their Demerits—Dated this 13th day of June 1730.

This to be publishd in as many of the Neighbouring Churches as the party Injurd shall desire.

Tho. Sodor. & Man
John Woods.

[PR2.2] (28 June 1730)

Sunday June 28. 1730.

This order publishd in KK Michael Church P
John Woods.

[PR2.3] (19 July 1730)

July 19th 1730.

This order was published in St Germans Church P
Robt Radcliffe.

1733

[PR3] [CONSISTORY COURT] (24 July 1733)

Depositions taken July 24. 1733 by virtue of the Rev^d M^r Curghy's Authority

a. Henry Quayle deposeth that Henry Sale 'of KK Patrick¹ came to his house last May day [*deleted* twelvemonth] 'two years,¹ & told him, that Thom^s Bells maidserv^t & children were walking on his Land the Eve before whereupon the Depont^t s^d they could do no harm there, but Sale replied if the s^d Bell could do any good to other people he could do the same to him & that the s^d Sale's Daught^r Eliz: told him this Summer that Thom^s Bells Daughter pluckt some hair of a heifer in the mountain & that She did not thrive since: & that some of them had done so to a colt, & y^t the colt dyed.
Hen: Quayle my m^{rk} +

b. Isabel Quayle wife to the above Dep^t being examind, deposeth, that [*deleted* about a day or two after last May Day] 'sometime this Summ^r Henry Sales wife came to her & told her that she came to send her husband upon an Errand to Tho^s Bell, viz^t that he the s^d Bell woud come for the heifer that 'She¹ were thrivd since some of them took hold of her & that they had a colt sometime before that after they touchd it; it pind away & dyed, & s^d to her as long as you are in favour wth the Sorceress 'you are¹ safe enough, & that she coud prove 'by a witness¹ that some of Bells family laid hands on the heifer whom she the s^d Dep^t understood afterward to be Bells Daughter.
Isabel Quayle her +

c. Margery Curlett deposeth that 'two girls y^t live with Hen:¹ Sale [*deleted* 's two Daughters] came to her, and One of em said, that Bells Daughter was picking of snails, but that no Doctor could cure him, because he had taken to heart the Oath he swore, that 'he¹ had no charms; but for all that, he kept apprentices, & that as well as they took the heifers hair, let em come & bring her bones also.
Margery Curlet her +

d. And further, that as Thom^s Bell was going to church on Sunday, Isabel Sale scrapd the 'dust¹ where he had passd on horseback, & sprinkld 'it¹ on the cattle.
Mare^v Curlet X

Taken by and before me July 24. 1733. JWoods Reg. Ep.

e. Jony Quay declares that in June last, Henry Sales wife said to 'the depon^t's Mistress [*deleted* viz^t Tho^s Bell Wife^l she] coud prove by Witnesses that Tho. Bells Daughter took a heifer of theirs by the head, & turnd her about 2 or 3 times; that she had taught her 'the sd^l Bells wife to bring earth from 'a^l Merehedge, but, by no means, from her the sd^d Sales Mere hedge; that there came a messenger Seven times from Bells wife to her for a Cap, belonging to a child of hers that dyed, & at the 7th time, she got it; that Some of it was burnt & some of it was given to Bell on drink.
Jony Quay her m^{rk} X

Taken by, & before me

JWoods.

f. Jo: Corrin & Marg^t Harrison both of KK Malew depose that (Tho: Bell & his wife Ellin Shimin being both born '& bred^l in this parish) they never saw or heard of any Charms or Sorcery used by them, or their Parents
Jo. Corrin his m^{rk}
Marg^t Harrison her m^{rk} +

Taken by, & before me

JWoods. July 24. 1733.

[PR3.1] [CONSISTORY COURT] (26 July 1733)

At a Consistory Court held at St Johns Chapel, July 26. 1733.

Tho^s Bell of KK Patrick having lately, at our Court at Peeltown, solely cleared himself of being any way given to Charming or Sorcery, & Notwithstanding 'this,^l Hen: Sales 'wife^l of the sd^d Parish & his family, having, without any cause or ground for such wicked sland^r maliciously propogated in the neighbourhood sev^l base storys to the Defamation of the sd^d Bell & his ffamily, as if they were guilty of such diabolical Practices In ord^r to wipe off so unjust an aspersion, & y^t they may be made sensible of their Duty to God, & their Neighb^{rs} Hen: Sales wife is to ask fforgiveness for the offence, & be severely reprovd plenā Ecclesiā, sub pena Confinem^t in St Germans by the Sumn^r or a Sold^r until she give Bonds to submit, & pay all ffees.

Publication is also 'to^l be made, y^t no person presume any way to revive the sd^d slander sub penā 3^l ad usum Domini, 40 days Imprisonm^t & further punishm^t according to Law & their Demerits. Dat. ut suprā.

To the Sumn^r of KK Patrick.

Jo: Curgy.

John Woods.

1742

[PR4] JURBY PRESENTMENTS (17 October 1742)

Upon complaint made by Thomas Clucas to Joⁿ Teare one of the Ward^{ns}, for that Cesar Teare used Witchcraft & Charms, he being seen walking through Philip Cristy's Corn early on May day in y^e morning after an unbecomeing manner,

[Upon complaint ... manner,] & that ye s^d Cesar Tear should 'also' say y^t seeing his Neighbours was for undermining him, y^t before Seven years wou'd come to an end there wou'd not be Seven doors open in y^t Neighbourhood. &c

Likewise his Daught^r Cath. Teare p^resented by the afforesd Ward^{en} for y^t she was seen on Mayday in the Morning at Mollineux Bittles Cow house door, sweeping & pulling down some of ye Thatch from 'of &c' above ye s^d Door. &c

[PR4.1] (17 October 1742?)

W^m Kindread to be Examin'd. Patr: Vandy & patr: Clark—to be charg'd as witnesses in this Case

Tho: Crain & Anne his wife of Ballaugh also to be charg'd in this Case.

[PR4.2] (29 October 1742)

At KK Michael Oct^r 29th 1742

Upon hearing these presentm^{ts} at two Sev^{rl} times there being no Witnesses to prove that Caesar Tear, or any of his family practis'd Charms or Witchcraft, or that he ever threatened his Neighb^{rs} in the Wicked Man^r w^{ch} is here laid to his Charge—'This is look'd upon to be a groundless & Malicious Slander—' Thomas Clucas (who in form'd ye Warden) as a Slanderer has 'therefore' in the face of the Court ask'd s^d Caesar forgiveness for the Injury done him & his family by so Unjust a Relection—Publication is therefore to be made y^t no person w^t ever does revive the Slander 'or upbraid Caesar Tear or any of his family with charms or witchcraft' sub pena £3 Ad Usū Dñi & further punishm^t according to Law.

John Cosnahan

Edw: Moore

1794

[PR5] MICHAEL PRESENTMENTS (June 1794)

They also present John 'ab.' Corjeage, concerning whom it has been reported, that on May morning last past, he had laid hold of a woman in this parish, who declared to him, that if he would not let her go, she would bewitch him,—and that upon his suggesting to her, That it was not in her powers, she replied and confessed, it was not in her power, knowing him to have in his pocket A Cross made of Round Tree.—

[Case scored through]



LIBER CAUSARUM



1715

[CI] LIBER CAUSARUM (7 May 1715)

Upon the Complaint of Marg^t wife of Joⁿ M[c]ylvorrey of Jurby, that she has been grossly scandaliz'd by Joⁿ Tear & Patrick Cain, wth respect to practices in Sorcery or Witchcraft, I have this day examin'd Thomas Clerk, & find as well by the s^d Clarks declaration, as by the confession of the s^d Joⁿ Tear & Patrick Cain, that the s^d Joⁿ Tear & Patrick Cain, that the s^d Marg^t & likewise her husband Joⁿ M[c]ylvorrey were suspected to have been out early in the morning last may day walking on the dew in their Neighbour's fields wth design ^r(as was said)^l to prejudice them in ye increase of their crop or Corn sown, w^{ch} was a rumour altogether false and groundless, the husband being only in his own fields, & his wife that morning in her bed, an hour or two longer than ordinary.

In order therefore to clear the reputations of the s^d Injured persons, & to discourage such vile & unchristian thoughts of one neighbour reciving damage from another by any trivial foolish customs of that kind, w^{ch} betray great weakness of faith & trust in God; It is hereby order'd, (in regard Joⁿ M[c]ylvorrey & his wife have freely forgiven Joⁿ Tear & Patrick Cain for the afores^d slander) that publication be made in the parish Church, that no person liable to Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction presume to aspire the s^d M[c]ylvorrey or his wife on the afores^d acc[oun^t], (they having voluntarily offer'd to clear themselves upon oath from [*deleted* ever) being guilty of any such practices] otherwise the person or persons offending ag[ains^t] this order to be fin'd in 3^l] ad usum Domini, to be 40 days imprison'd, as further punish'd, as the Ordinary shall direct

Dated at Ballaugh this 7th day of May 1715

To the Sumner of Jurby.

W^m Walker vic^r Gen^l

[CI.I] LIBER CAUSARUM (15 May 1715)

15th May 1715

This Order was published in the Church of St Pat^{rk} Jurby the day & year abovsd By
Jo: Christian vic^r P^{rk} Jurby

1738

[C2.] LIBER CAUSARUM (1738)

To the Right Revnd Lord Bishop of this Isle
and the rest of the Revnd officers of the Spiritual Court
The humble peticon of Leonora Cowl of Lezair

Sheweth

That y^r pet^{rs} good name and Reputation hath been much blasted and Traduced by her neighbour M^r Joⁿ Garrot Sen^r of Ballabroy, in that he hath for along time, after amalicious manner Whispered and persuaded folks to believe, that y^e pet^r is in a triving condition by the unlawful means she useth, in gathering the Dew of his wheat on May day morning to which wicked Expressions (ab^t thirteen days past) the sd M^r Garret upcast to her face. And in regard an abuse of this nature is not only Injurious to y^e peticon^s own person but also highly tends to the Utter Ruin of her family

Yo^r pet^r therefore most humbly Implores for a speedy hearing this 'day,¹ that the offender may meet with merited Justice according to law. And she as Dutifully bound shall ever pray &c.

[C2.1] LIBER CAUSARUM (2 June 1738)

At a Consistory Court in KK Mich^l June 2^d 1738

a. Philip Quayle maketh that about a fortnight Agoe Viz^t on Whitsun: Eve, M^r John Garrett Sen^r & Leonora the wife of Arthur Cowle quarrelling & contending he heard y^e s^d M^r Garrett say to Leonora Afores^d—You Bitch or Bold = Face, (he 'cannot' distinguish w^{ch} of the Words)—You were gathering the Dew of my Wheat on May day in the Morning. Phil: Quayle's X

b. Rob^t Goldsmith deposeth in ev'ry particular as the Depon^t Phil: Quayle

Rob^t Goldsmith's X

c. Ewan Kneal, Stephen Cleator & Rob^t Crow being Examin'd upon Oath—depose that they heard the Above persons Quarrelling but cou'd not Apprehend In Particular w^t Relections or ill Language pass'd—Kneal deposes that he took Leonora's hand out of M^r Garrets hair—

Ewan Kneal X

Stephen Cleator X

Rob^t Crow—X

d. Mem^{dm} M^r John Garrett Sen^r acknowledges that he spoke the Relections within mentioned—and as deposed by Phil: Quayl & Rob^t Goldsmith

e. He further 'avers' y^t Cap^t Waleworth told him, that Leonora Cowle was a Witch.

Taken by & before—Edw: Moore

[C2.2] LIBER CAUSARUM (19 June 1738)

KK Michael, June 19th 1738

a. Tho^s Cannel maketh Oath that after the within Depositions were taken June 2^d last past in KK Michael Church—Mr John Garret Sen^r said that he ack[no]wledg^d whatever the witness^{es} had prov^d,—& that he also (swearing by God) said, that Capt Wattleworth told him she was a Witch—w^{ch} ^rhe^l Appended to be Leonora the wife of Arthur Cowle—being the person then spoken of
Tho^s Cannel

b. Tho^s Cain ^rupon oath^l Agrees wth the Above Depon^t in every particular—& further saith not.

Before me—Edw: Moore.

[C2.3] LIBER CAUSARUM (15 June 1738)

KK Michael, June 15th 1738

Mr Garret Sen^r having Charg^d Leonora the Wife of Arthur Cowle wth practices tending to Sorcery the following Depositions—are taken in his Suit.

a. Mr John Corlet deposes that about two Years Agoe as he was talking in his own house, about Eggs found in his Hay & Corn fields, & partly under ground—And wondering w^t cou^d be the meaning of it—Dan^l Goldsmith his Man : Serv^t at y^t time, said—that some Years agoe—he saw Leonora the Wife of Arthur Cowle, on a certain May day in the Morning before Sun: rise in Balla : Brooy little pollagh sweeping the Dew wth her hands; he further declares—y^t Goldsmith said, Simon Killip was looking at s^d Leonora the same time.
Joⁿ Corlet

b. W^m Corlet sworn, declares as the Above Depon^t in evry particular—& that he was in place wⁿ Dan^l Goldsmith told so: in the family—and that he heard so frequently from Goldsmith—Viz^t that Goldsmith said, he saw Leonora in the fores^d place, before the people got up, Standing Upright & Stooping Viz^t on May day in the Morning & y^t Goldsmith said—Simon Killip was looking at Leonora the same time
W^m Curlett X.

[C2.4] LIBER CAUSARUM (19 June 1738)

KK Michael, June 19th 1738 .

a. John Kewley maketh Oath that Dan^l Goldsmith Jun^r told him—that he saw some body on Balnahowin Wheat on some May day in the Morning, he thought it was a Woman, but cou^d not tell who it was—And that she went of eastward—Goldsmith told him further that he wanted to see wo it was—but his Mr, Arthur Cowle wou^d not suffer him—for fear that person m^t do him some harm .
John Kewley's X.

b. John ^rKneen^l maketh Oath y^t Dan^l Goldsmith afores^d told him ^rMr Garret Jun^r being then prest^l that he saw Arthur Cowles Wife upon Ballabrooy's Corn—taking up the Dew ^ron May day in y^e Morning—the^l Depon^t reply^d—Sure you abuse her.—No says Goldsmith.—I have cast the same in her teeth.—
John Kneen's. X.

These Depositions on June 15th & 19th 1738 taken before me

Ed: Moore

[C2.5] LIBER CAUSARUM (19 June 1738)

KK Michael, June 19th 1738 .

Whereas it has been prov'd—that M^r John Garrett Sen^r hath most Unjustly Slandered his Neighbour Leonora the Wife of Arthur Cowle—That he has called her, Bitch or Bold Face—That he has charg'd her with Practices tending to Sorcery or Witchcraft And by way of Relection, Upbraided her with Gathering the Dew of his Wheat on May day in the Morning—And that M^r Garrett Afores^d had in Open Court, and in the face of the Country Averr'd—that Cap^t Wattleworth told him—that s^d Leonora was a Witch—And for as much as, upon Trial, M^r Garrett is not able to prove any of the Charge or Relections Above mencōned

As these are slanders of an Heinous Nature, & without any real Grounds or foundation, high[ly] injurious to the Reputation of leonora Afores^d—That due Reparation may be made for such Uncharitable Relections—And the Slanderer be made Sensible of his Sin—He is to be comitted in S^t German's prison till he givs Bonds to Ask the Party Injur'd Solemn forgivenes plenâ Ecclâ, And to Acknowledge his fault & promise Reformation—Publicacon is also to be made that no person whatever presume to Revive any of thse Slanders or to Upbraid Leonora or her family therewith, sub poenâ £3 ad Usū Dni, 40 Days Imprisonm^t & further censure according to Law

Edw: Moore

To the Sumn^t of Lez: Ayre who if Disobey'd is to desire A Sold^t

[C2.6] LIBER CAUSARUM (9 July 1738)

July 9th—The Sixth Sunday after Trinity

The Above publish'd in Lezayre—Church

Matt^s Curghey

[C2.7] LIBER CAUSARUM (1738)

To the Rev^d Edward Moore oficial.

The Appeal of Joⁿ Garrett of Lezaire

Shewing

That your appellat is confined by your ordeer of the 19th June last for reasons sett forth in the s^d order, by w^{ch} yr appellat holds himself very much agreived

Therefore he appeals from your order to the R^t Rev^d L^d Bpp or his vicars Gen^{ll} praying a reasonable time to prosecute the same wth his enlargement, and he as [B]ound shall &c

[C2.8] LIBER CAUSARUM (1 August 1738)

KK Michael. Augt 1st 1738

Upon the Appealant's giving Bonds that he will within 14 Days after Date lay this Matter in Judgem^t before the R^t Revnd the L^d Bishop or his Vicar's Gen^{ll}—As also that he will make his Appeal good—& give the Adverse Party due Notice of y^e Time to be Appointed for the trial hereof—this Appeal is Accepted, & the Appeal^t to be set at Liberty. Paying the Fees as Usual.

Edw: Moore

[C2.9] LIBER CAUSARUM (10 August 1738)

Gentlemen

You will appoint a Time, Consistant with this busy Season, for the Hearing Of this Appeal, Obliging the Appellant to bring Authentic copys Of What has been already done in this cause; That none may be charg'd as Witnessses unnecessarily, & that such as are may have a recompense for their trouble & loss of time Given Under My hand this 10th Of Aug^t 1738.

Tho · Sodor. & Man

[C2.10] LIBER CAUSARUM (1738)

To the Reverend M^r John Woods & M^r John Cosnahan,
Vicars General Of this Isle.

To the Revnd M^r Edward Moore Oficial &c
The humble peticōn of Leonora Cowll

Sheweth

That y^r pet^r was most unjustly slandered by her neighb^r M^r Joⁿ Garrett Sen^r of Ballabroy with practices tending to Socery or witchcraft & since ^rthat¹ after sev'll days of hearing he cou'd make nothing to appear of any charge ag^t y^e pet^r so that you are pleas'd to ord^r him to St German's prison untill he wou'd give bonds to ask forgiveness before y^e Congregation for y^e Injury don y^e pet^r &c. the s^d Garrett pursuant to y^e s^d ord^r was confin'd, and since releas'd as y^r pet^r apprehend by an Appeal from y^r s^d ord^r or Judgm^t to the R^t Rrd Lord Bishop.

And y^r pet^r bearing very uneasy under the s^d sland^r she humbly prayeth ashort day of hearing of the s^d Appeal, if the time therein Limited be not already Expired and she as bound shall pray

[C2.11] LIBER CAUSARUM (28 August 1738)

KK Michael Aug^t 28:1738. M^r John Garrett was by Order of June 19th 1738 committed in St Germans for slandering the peticoner, and Apprehending himself Aggriev'd, he Appeal'd from y^r Judgm^t to the R^t Rev^d the L^d Bp or his Vic^{rs} Gen^{rl} I accepted of his Appeal, & granted his Enlargement upon these Conditions Vis^t—Upon the Appalants giving bond that he wou'd within 14 Days after Date, lay that Matter in Judgm^t before My Lord Bishop, or his Vic^{rs} Gen^{rl}—as also y^t he wou'd make his Appeal good, and give the Adverse party notice of the time & place to be appointed for trial—so y^t the Peticōnr is now to make Applicacōn to the R^t Rev^d the L^d Bishop, before Whom the Matter is at present Cognisable

Edw: Moore

[C2.12] LIBER CAUSARUM (1 September 1738)

M^r Cosnahan

My Vic^r Gen^l M^r Woodes being indisposed, I must desire you to fix a short day wh^h you can meet me at KK Michael in order to Hear the above ^rmentiond¹ appeal; & the ^rPetr^r shall have my Token to charge the Above M^r Garrett to appear before us

Tho. Sodor & Man

To the Reverend Mr Vic^r Gen^l John Cosnahan. Dat Sept. 1st 1738

[C2.13] LIBER CAUSARUM (7 September 1738)

At KK Michael Sep^r 7th 1738

Having this 'day' heard the Appeal of Mr Joⁿ Garret from an Order or Judgm^t of the Rev^d Mr Edward Moor Official, bearing date the 19th June last—Wherein he is censur'd for slandering Leonora Cowle—I do adjudge the proceedings of the Official in the case to be regular, & his Order agreeable to 'justice & the practise of this Church; Whereupon I do hereby affirm the same, and order the s^d Mr John Garrett Sen^r to be forthwith comitted untill he give bonds to submit to the order given in that behalf under the penalty therein mentioned, & before releasm^t to pay all fees—

John Cosnahan

To the Sumner of Lezayre who in case of disobed^{ce} is to desire a Soldier

[C2.14] LIBER CAUSARUM (7 September 1738)

KK Michael, Sept^r 7th 1738

Daniel Goldsmith having after a Rascally & Malicious manner slandered Leonora Cowle, by frequently insinuating in the family of Balna howin—As if s^d Leonora was Addicted to Sorcery, and that she gathered the Dew on May day in the Morning in Balla: brooy's little Pollagh—All which he does now openly deny—And declares—that he never saw that Woman upon Balla : brooy's Corn,—or Gathering the Dew—That the Slandered may become sensible how base and Wicked a thing it is, to raise an evil Report of his Neighb^r and that others may be taught to bridle their Tongues—Order'd that he be forthwith Comitted in St German's prison till he gives bonds to ask Leonora Afores^d forgiveness, before the Congregacōn, after a becoming man^r—He is also to Acknowledge his fault, and to own himself sorry for the Offence he has given—Let it also be publish'd—that if either he or any oth^r person dare to revive these slanders—thye do hereby become Liable to the forfeiture of £3 ad Usū Dñi & further Censure according to Law—All fees are to be paid before Releasm^t

Edw: Moore

To the Sumn^r of Lez: Ayre who if disobey'd is to desire a Sold^r

1741

[C3] LIBER CAUSARUM (1741)

To the Rev^d Mr Edward Moore Vicar Gen^l

The humble petition of Margrett Christian of KK Bride

Shewing

That yo^r pet^r has now or sometime past, laboured under great trouble of heart and mind, on occasion of some very scandalous Relections, whispert about by invidious

Neighbours; charging her with the abominable practice of Sorcery or Witchcraft which charge she hopes to prove by sufficient wittnisses.

She therefore humbly prays that the case may be strictly Examined and inquired into, and justice done how according as the Law can afford, which will ease her troubled mind, and oblige her yo^r happyness to pray .

[c3.1] (4 July 1741)

At KK Michael–July–4.1741.

Depositions taken to prove the within peticōn of complaint

a. John Christian deposes that going to Church lately on Sunday Morning–& meeting with John Vandy–going forwards–they found John Cowle near his own house–John Vandy said–it seems they have got a fole at Balla Cree–Yes said Cowle aforesaid–those people will have foles & oth^r things too–And tho’ (said he further to this Depont^t) the Good Wife is your Cousin–she was seen in an ill or unbecoming behaviour upon May day in the morning–taking up the Dew. She went said he to the Lands of Balla Kesh, where she took up some of the earth–which she sprinkled or spread as she walk’d along upon her own Lands–And that it went thro’ the Air like Smoke.–The Depont says further–that the boys at Balla kesh saw the s^d Woman, this year–and the Good man saw her the last year. John Christian’s M^{rk} X

b. John Vandy above mencōned declares upon oath in every particular as the Depont^t John Christian–& further saith not. John Vandy’s X

c. John Cowle acknowledges that he spoke all the words, as more fully express’d in the beforegoing Depositions–

Before me Edw: Moore

[c3.2] (4 July 1741)

At KK Michael July 4.1741.

It being prov’d by Depositions now taken, that John Cowle has after a wicked manner slandered Marg^t the Wife of James Christian of Balla Cree–by saying–that she was seen in an unbecoming behaviour upon May Day in the Morning–Taking up the Dew–and carrying Earth from her neighbours feild–and sprinling the same upon her own Lands–All w^{ch} are Vile Imputations, and by w^{ch} he wou’d Insinuate that the s^d Woman was Addicted to Sorcerous practices or Witch:craft–That he may be made sensible–how grievous a Sin it is–to raise an evil Report of his Neighbour–And that he and others may be taught to fear God–and to trust in him for a Blessing upon their Goods & their Labours–John Cowle Afores^d is hereby Order’d to Ask ^rs^d Marg^t Christian Forgiveness before the Congregacōn on the Lords Day–where he is to confess his sin & to promise Reformation–with w^{ch} if he refuses to comply–he is to be comitted in S^t Germans till he gives Bonds to submit & to pay all fees–Publication is also to be made that no person w^t ever does revive the s^d Slander sub poenâ 3£ ad Usū Dñi–& further Censure according to Law.–The Slanderer is to pay all fees or to be comitted.

Edw: Moore

To the Sumn^r of KK Bride who is disobey'd is to desire a Sold^r

Exam p^r Ed: Moore Ep: Reg^{tin}

[C3.3] (12 July 1741)

July 12th 1741

This order was publish'd in KK Bride Church, before afull Congregation: by me

Matth: Curghey



APPENDIXES



WILLIAM KENNISH

“OLD MAY EVE”

(1844)



Mona's Isle, and Other Poems (London: J. Bradley & Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1844) 48–64.

- 1 When winter's gloom no longer cast
A cloud o'er Mona's isle,
And fields at length, in sweet contrast,
With renovated soil
Began to show their vernal bloom,
And charge the air with rich perfume
Throughout the lowland vales,
While heather-bells, and yellow broom,
Instead of dreary winter's gloom,
Enrobed the highland dales,
The cattle loiter'd from the stall,
Obedient to the herdsman's call,
To range at large the field;
The honeysuckles round did crawl
With mimic life the cottage-wall,
Their fragrance sweet to yield,
And April's kind refreshing showers
Brought forth the moorland simple flowers;
20 The loving turtles cooed;
The small birds in the thorny bow'rs
Enjoy'd their sweet connubial hours
With their unfeather'd brood,
The partridge from the heights did roam,
To seek a more congenial home
To rear its tender young;
Thus Nature did her charms display
To welcome in the twelfth of May,
From which I take my song.
- 30 Back in those days when Superstition's wile
Was rife within my fair and native isle,

And sages strove with unabated toil
 'Gainst all who wish'd their ancient ways to foil
 It was the case in that benighted age
 That all, from urchin to the tott'ring sage,
 Implicitly believed the story true,
 That all the witches in the island flew,
 At times like crows, transform'd by magic skill,
 Or into hares they'd turn themselves at will,
 40 T' evade the scrutiny of human sight,
 On old May-eve, at twelve o'clock at night,
 To swear their dark allegiance anew
 With Beelzebub and his infernal crew,
 To vent their spite upon the human race,
 In some sequester'd goblin-haunted place,
 Where the Satanic council would appear
 To give instructions for th' ensuing year,
 And issue mandates of their dark intrigue
 To those old witches serving in their league.

50 Now when arrived th' eleventh of May,
 As I have heard old Manxmen say,
 Each horse was snugly stall'd,
 And cows from off the grassy plain,
 Ere Sol had kiss'd the western main,
 Were promptly homewards call'd;
 The sheep from off the mountain's height
 Were drove in flocks to rest that night,
 So fraught with pending ill,
 60 Within the wicket of the yard,
 That they from witches might be spared
 By counteracting skill:—
 The rank *bolugh*,¹ of magic charm,
 Th' infernal legions to disarm
 Of all their deadly pow'r,
 Was strew'd along the cow-house floor,
 And round the threshold of the door,
 With many a yellow flow'r;
 And crosses of the *rowan*² tree

1 The Manx name given to a yellow weed frequently found in meadows, supposed to possess a charm against witchcraft.

2 The mountain ash.

70 Were form'd by swains in homely glee,
 And tied to each cow's tail,
 And round the lintels of the bire ³
 To further check their fiendish ire,
 If bolugh-charm should fail;
 For if they once their spell could lay
 Upon the kine, they'd pine away
 By sure and slow degrees,
 And baffle all the good wife's skill
 80 That year her butter-crock to fill,
 Or even make a cheese;
 In vain she'd agitate the cream,
 And of new hoards of butter dream,
 And plunge and plunge again
 The staff into the spell-bound churn,
 With many a skilful twisting turn,
 And shoulder-aching pain:—
 She'd make the kitchen poker hot,
 To counteract the spiteful plot
 Of the suspected dame,
 90 By plunging it into the cream,
 To make the spell fly off in steam,
 But still no butter came.
 In vain she'd try to make a cheese,
 The whey from 'mongst the curd to squeeze
 Surpass'd her, tho' well skill'd;
 For e'en the rennet's influence
 Had caught the fatal consequence
 Before the calf was kill'd.
 To guard against each dire event,
 100 The old May-eve was yearly spent,
 Partly as I have said;
 But what I have yet to relate
 About this scene of ancient date,
 Took place within the glade.

When now protected by each charm
 All living things upon the farm;
 The youthful swains would take their flight

³ Cow-house.

110 To some commanding neighb'ring height,
 And set the crackling furze alight,
 Which by creating such a blaze
 As fairly mock'd the moon's pale rays,
 And well kept up till break of day,
 Would scare the warlock host away.

120 That eve the speckl'd thrush had press'd
 His brooding mate upon the nest,
 Then hopp'd upon a neighb'ring spray
 To charm her with his ev'ning lay,
 And placed, when he had ceased to sing,
 His mellow lute beneath his wing.
 Then all the small birds in the glade
 Would cease their mates to serenade,
 And drop to rest upon a thorn
 To wait the first coy peep of morn.
 Ah! little did the songsters know
 How close at hand the hour of woe,
 When the destructive brands were seen
 Advancing 'cross the lowland green,—
 130 Like those nocturnal fiery damps ⁴
 Which oft are seen amongst the swamps
 To dance with many a wondrous prank,
 When charged the air with vapour dank,
 And oft delude the courting swain
 Into some marshy bog or drain,
 Mistaking it to be the light
 From some lone cot that met his sight;
 Thus led astray to meet his fate
 Just as he thought to gain the gate,—
 140 So might be seen on old May night
 The torches' zigzag glaring light,
 Winding their course along the plain
 Borne by the zealous rustic train;
 But when they did the brand apply,
 The parent-birds alarm'd would fly,
 With frightful screams, around each nest:
 It might have moved the hardest breast,

⁴ The ignis fatuus.

To hear the helpless wee-things squeak
 With outstretch'd neck and open'd beak,
 150 As if imploring for relief,
 Thus adding to the old birds' grief;—
 Alas! it was beyond their pow'r
 To save them in this evil hour:
 The red destructive element
 Was raging round their little tent,
 Which cost them many a weary day
 To hedge around with moss and hay,
 And line with due parental care
 With interwoven wool and hair.
 160 The flames had done their ravage now
 Leaving behind the bare black bough,
 And scorch'd to death the callow-brood
 Lay 'mongst the mouldering embers strew'd.

Ere chanticleer, with clarion shrill,
 Would break the enchantment of the *gill*,⁵
 Where sat old Nick in state that night,
 He and his suite took to their flight,
 And left old Kate⁶ in full possession
 170 Of his black art, and at discretion
 To initiate those upon probation,
 And give each hag her proper station,
 Tho' first she'd Hornie to consult
 Who best if appoint to *Crag na Mult*,⁷
 Being the most important post
 Of all Kirk Maughold's warlock coast.
 Now Kate to each her post decreed,
 And all assembled had agreed
 To put their witchcraft to the test,
 180 And for their master do their best,
 When hark! that sound a warning brings,
 'Tis chanticleer's shrill voice that rings;
 Uprose the witches great and small

⁵ A provincial name for a glen.

⁶ An old woman who was a special delegate of Hornie in consequence of her right of seniorship, and skill in the cabalistic art.

⁷ An eminence in Kirk Maughold, four miles from Ramsey, on the Douglas road, famed of old for being the haunt of the higher grade of witches.

Obedient to the warning call—
 As ravens from their carrion flee
 To seek the shelter of the tree,
 When midst their feast they startled hear
 The fowler's gun loud ringing near—
 So did each beldame take to flight,
 190 As rang that sound across the night.

Kate took her course to *Glen reagh Rushen* ⁸
 Where long she'd lived with Nan, her cousin,
 Whose counsel she full often drew
 When mischief dire she wish'd to brew,
 And there was known for many a year
 To keep the country-side in fear.
 At her command the *gobogs dole* ⁹
 Would rend the nets in many a hole,
 200 And liberate the herring shoal.
 She'd raise the wind with sudden blast
 And leave the boat without a mast;
 And drive her on the leeward shore
 To perish midst the breakers' roar.
 Indeed 'twas said she could out-do
 Old Nick himself, and all his crew;
 And his Satanic mirth provoke
 By many a wily witchcraft joke;
 For she was up to all the art
 210 Himself and council could impart;
 But notwithstanding all her power,
 She could not see th' impending hour
 That frown'd upon her guilty plan
 And on her mischief laid a ban,
 For as it chanced a Manxman stood
 In ambush near a copse of wood,
 Where all the plain he could command,
 A loaded rifle in his hand,
 Ready to take a deadly aim,
 220 And put a stop to her wild game.—
 He was not long left in suspense

⁸ A glen in Kirk Christ Rushen, famed for being the resort of all kinds of supernatural beings.

⁹ The blind Dog Fish.

Before her work she did commence;
 At first on raven wings she flew,
 As if to take a gen'ral view,
 And scan around with cautious gaze
 If aught observed her warlock-ways,
 Giving the Manxman ample scope
 To realize his sanguine hope,—
 He points his tube towards her wing,
 230 Then draws the trigger of the spring,
 But to his great astonishment
 No sparkling fire flew from the flint,
 The hammer struck with sound as dead
 As if 't had been a piece of lead.
 During the interval of time
 It took the rifle to reprime,
 The hag had lighted from the air
 And changed herself into a hare,
 Which sprang close by to where he stood,
 240 Freezing with fear the Manxman's blood,
 But when recover'd once again,
 A happy thought flash'd o'er his brain,
 That he had heard his grandam say,
 How many a warlock in her day
 Was shot to death by silver balls,
 And now the very fact recalls,
 That both his wrist-bands did attach
 Two silver studs, which few could match,
 For they were heir-looms of his granny,
 250 And much admired by his Nanny:
 But willing not to lose this chance
 He now most boldly did advance,
 Tearing the buttons from his sleeve
 This great adventure to achieve,
 He ramm'd them down with tardy hand,
 And said, "*shee yee*,"¹⁰ with self-command,
 As he the silver charm let fly
 Which shot the creature in the thigh,
 Just as it leap'd across the ditch,
 260 And rid Glen Rushen of the witch,

¹⁰ An exclamation in the Manx language, meaning "Preserve me," &c. &c.

For it was said a wounded hag
 At break of morn was seen to lag,
 With hobbling steps as though in pain,
 Leaving a blood-track on the plain,
 And further, that whilst in this plight,
 Old Hornie seized her in his right.

Thus ended the career of Kate,
 And when her cousin learnt her fate;
 270 She very wisely took the hint
 That men were now on mischief bent—
 Would use the sense that few of yore
 Had ever shown in force before,
 To pop her off some luckless day,
 And make of her a lawful prey
 For his Satanic majesty,
 Long ere her contract-day was nigh:
 For when site 'fore his council stood
 And wrote in letters with her blood
 280 Her lineage, and her Christian name,
 And vow'd no further right or claim
 To Providence— but his alone,
 When mortal life from her had flown,
 And not till then— but while on earth
 She was to revel in her mirth.
 That she might live a quiet life
 She now resolved to end the strife
 Existing 'twixt her and mankind,
 And set to work her crafty mind
 290 How best both parties she could please;
 For she had taken high degrees
 In the dissimulating art,
 And studied well the human heart.
 Her dark alliance with old Nick
 She still most scrupulously strict
 Perform'd unto the very letter,
 For few than her own self knew better
 How to evade each binding clause
 In Beelzebub's infernal laws;
 300 And as for mere mankind to teaze
 She'd do 't by proxy at her ease

And so it proved, for never more
 Was the old baggy seen to soar,
 Stride legs upon her beesom stick,
 Or play a solitary trick
 Of her own wonted witchery
 On either poor or gentry,
 But lived retired on the bog
 With her pet sheep and faithful dog,
 310 Which also to a tale gave rise
 That they were witches in disguise.
 As often as old Coaly ¹¹ howl'd
 Some great disaster was foretold;
 And when her chanticleer would *gerram* ¹²
 Old wives would say "*chee yee drow marrum.*"¹³
 Yet, still her former fame did spread
 From the Dhoon bridge to Maughold head;
 For it was said, since she retired,
 That she the fairies often hired
 320 As her auxiliaries at night,
 Being more commodious for flight
 Than her corporeal candidates; ¹⁴
 They thus perform'd more marvellous feats
 Than could a hare or carrion crow,
 For elves could through the key-hole go,
 Or through a crevice in the wall,
 Or any chink though e'er so small,
 To administer her dark design
 Without a trace of earthly sign.
 They'd ransack all the cupboards through,
 330 And play a pretty how-d'-ye-do.
 They next would go in airy flocks
 To see that all the water-crocks
 Were rightly placed, and brimming full,
 That each might have a quenching pull:
 But woe be to the sleeping maid
 Were crocks not fill'd and duly laid: ¹⁵

¹¹ The name of her dog.

¹² Crow.

¹³ Peace be with me.

¹⁴ Those witches alluded to as being on probation, ere they were allowed to take high degrees in witchcraft.

For once it chanced, in days gone by,
 That the good dame to bed did hie,
 Forgetting all about the water,
 340 And sacrificed her only daughter
 To many a ling'ring year of pain—
 Her case no doctor could explain—
 For on that very luckless night
 The fairies came, and at first sight
 Descried the matron's gross neglect,
 And without waiting to reflect
 They flew towards the daughter's bed,
 And in her sleep the virgin bled,
 350 Tradition says not in what part,
 Altho' no doubt 'twas near the heart:
 They introduced their lancets keen
 To carry out their vengeful spleen,
 In drawing, whilst the dame did snore,
 Her daughter's vitals from the core
 Into an heir-loom china mug;
 Then hid it 'neath the chimney-lug,
 That while it wasted day by day,
 The virgin too would pine away
 And die,—when no more blood was there
 360 To vanish slowly into air.¹⁶
 But ere the fatal day arrived
 Old Nelly ¹⁷ by her skill contrived
 T' explore the mystery of the spell,
 But by what means she ne'er would tell.
 But here it may suffice to say,
 That on a stormy winter's day
 She enter'd with her poke and staff,—
 Found the dame and her better-half
 In deep affliction for their child,

¹⁵ This custom of filling the water crocks with clean water, for the use of the fairies, before the family would venture to their beds, was strictly complied with by the Manx in former days, which water was never used for any other purpose, but thrown into the sink each morning.

¹⁶ The death of many young women has been attributed to the above superstition in the island.

¹⁷ An old woman supported by the charity of the public, by receiving from each farm-house a plateful of oatmeal, which in the Isle of Man is the custom to support the indigent and aged.

370 Who sat, with aspect meek and mild,
 Wrapt up in blankets from the cold
 in many a well-adjusted fold.
 Old Nelly then tuck'd up her gown,
 Untied her poke and laid it down;
 And sought her well-known resting seat
 Close by the cheerful blazing peat;
 And in due order did proceed
 To cut the stimulating weed;
 And charge her short and coal-black pipe;
 380 Giving its stem a graceful wipe
 When she the soothing bowl had fired;
 Then most respectfully retired
 As far within the chimney-cheek
 As was convenient from the reek;¹⁸
 Taking a survey round each shelf,
 She to the dame address'd herself—
 “My blessing on my *Mannin veen*,¹⁹
 And on the heir Of Ballaqueen;²⁰
 Full well I knew him when a boy;
 390 And witness'd all the mother's joy
 To see his youthful heart inclined
 To feed the aged poor and blind.
 He oft would urge her of her store
 Of meal to give a trifle more;
 And now, when I am press'd with age,
 And on the verge of nature's stage,
 It makes my wither'd heart to glow
 That I one blessing can bestow
 On you, and the afflicted one,
 400 Whose sinking form a spell is on.
 This night, at twelve, come here alone,
 And underneath this very stone
 You'll find a china mug or cup,
 Which you will take, then break it up,
 And throw the pieces in the fire;
 Then quickly to your bed retire,
 And you will see your child at length

¹⁸ Smoke.

¹⁹ Dear isle of Man.

²⁰ The father of the sick girl.

Slowly resume her wonted strength."
 Her words proved true, for soon the maid
 410 "Began to thrive,"— as old wives said;
 Her cheeks resumed their wonted hue
 And she a comely woman grew;²¹
 And always saw an ample stock
 Of good spring water in each crock
 Before she ventured to her bed
 Mindful to what neglect had led.
 Such were the pranks that fairies play'd,
 Tho' many a well-schemed plan was laid
 By Ballawhane and many more,
 420 Who skill'd in astrologic lore,
 Their dark enchantments to explore,
 And send them to their native Styx
 No more on man to play their tricks;
 But they were proof 'gainst all their skill,
 And kept possession of the gill,
 Where oft Kate's coz. was seen to stray
 At break of morn, and close of day,
 T' engage their service when she needed,
 And thus she in her plans succeeded,
 430 Until the poor old creature died,
 Grossly neglected and belied.

In these proceedings we descry
 A relic of those days gone by
 When dark Credulity enshrined
 In ignorance the human mind;
 When Cruelty, with gory hand,
 440 Dealt devastation through the land,
 With that infernal foe to man,
 Grim Superstition, in the van;
 When men unsheath'd the murd'rous steel,
 And 'neath the guise of holy zeal
 Implored Omnipotence divine
 To aid them in their dark design.

²¹ I have heard, when a boy, the above traditional tale often told by aged persons, under the conviction that the story was strictly true.

Thank heaven, the cloud is nearly past
That gave those monsters birth,
And Truth's bright rays are covering fast
450 The long-benighted earth.

Tho' tyrants yet, e'en at this hour,
Still crush their fellow man,
Short shall be their unhallowed pow'r,
For knowledge has began

To pour her beams, from east to west
O'er earth from pole to pole,
At great Jehovah's high behest
460 T' illuminate the soul.

Though slowly yet its course appears
Along life's thorny ways,
The day shall come, in later years,
When with refulgent blaze

Its rays shall shine from heaven above
On man throughout all space,
And clothe with philanthropic love
470 His soul with god-like grace;—

Blest Consummation! when no more
Man shall delight in strife,
But join in heart from shore to shore
To ease the ills of life.



REV. JOHN KELLY

BAAL



Rev. William Gill, ed., *Fockleyr Manninagh as Baarlagh liorish Juan y Kelly* (Douglas: Manx Society, 1866). [Also, Rev. William Gill, ed., *The Manx Dictionary in Two Parts. First, Manx and English; and the Second, English and Manx* (Douglas: Manx Society, 1866).]

AAL

[2b] AAL, *s.* a contraction of Baal, as in the appellative of the town, city, or place where the Tin-Vaal was kept on the first day of May, known to this day by the name of *Aal-caer*, Baal's town or city. But this word may signify *oayl*, a place, haunt, or stead, and *gaer*, the ordure of cattle; and when used as a proper name, signify the place where the cattle for sacrifices were kept, or killed. It may also be derived from *oayl* and *garroo*; as the highway near the old Tin-Vaal is called *raad garroo*, the rough road.

AIN, AN, AINEY

[6a] AIN, AN, AINEY, *s.* a ring, as *fainey*; a basin, a cup: hence *bleain*, and *bleean*, a year; i.e. *Baal an* the circle of the sun or Baal.

AILE, AINLE

[5b] AILE, AINLE, *s. pl.* YN. fire, onc of the four elements, a fire, an angel. We have here the same word for fire and angel, (though we have attempted in our translation of the Bible to make a distinction by retaining or omitting the *n*) and may justly conclude that the Celts considered fire as divine; that the Deity appeared and operated by and in fire; that his "angels and ministers" were "a flaming fire;" and hence originated the worship of the sun (as the best resemblance of the glory of God) which animates all things. (*Lat. angelus*, and *ignis*.)

BAAL

[13a] BAAL, *s.* Baal, Apollo, the Sun. Baal, Beel, Bel, or Bol, a king of the Assyrians, son of Nimrod, and father of Ninus, was the first who applied himself to the study of astronomy, and being deified [14a] by his subjects, was the first Apotheosis, and hence called *Baal, Dominus and Baal Sauin, Dominus celi*. *Diod. Sic. l. 3*. Thus the Assyrian or Phenician Baal, and the Apollo of the Greeks appear to be the same, and to mean the Sun; for the word *Grian*, the Celtic for Sun, is the Grynœus Apollo: and

as the different Planets were held by the Greeks and Romans, according to Cicero, to be the gods whose names they bear, so the Sun under the different appellations abovementioned, was the God of the Assyrians, Phenicians, Samaritans, and Carthaginians, as well as of the Irish, Erse, Manks, and all the Celtic Tribes. Among the Greeks and Romans, however, Apollo was only a secondary deity; among the Celts Baal or the Sun was the great and perhaps their only God; while the Moon, the Queen of Heaven, under the name of *Ashtaroth*, or *Astarte*, was their only Goddess. Judg. x. 6. (*Ir. Bal, Bel, Beel, Beal; lat. Apollo*).

BAAL-SAUIN

[14a] BAAL-SAUIN, s. the name of Baal; and signifies Lord of Heaven or the Sun. The first day of November was dedicated to his worship, and is called *Laa-Souiney*, and the Season or Month *yn Tauyn*; because anciently the first day of November was the first day of the year: and the Mummers on the eve of All-Saints' Day still begin their petition with these remarkable words, "To-night is New Year's night. Og-u-naa. The Moon shines fair and bright. Tro-la-la." On this night, in the words of Jeremiah, "the women knead their dough to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven," which is the *Moon* alluded to in the Mummer's petition, called in Scripture, *Ashtaroth*: "They served Baalim and Ashtaroth." Much ceremony is observed in making this cake, which is sacred to love, (for the Syrian *Astarte* is supposed to be the Greek *Venus*,) and is called the "soddag valloo" or dumb cake. Every woman is obliged to assist in mixing the ingredients, kneading the dough and baking the cake on glowing embers; and when sufficiently baked they divide it, eat it up, and retire to their beds backwards without speaking a word, from which silence the cake derives its name, and in the course of the night expect to see the images of the men who are destined to be their husbands. This eve is called "oie houiney."

BAALTINN

[14a] BAALTINN, pronounced BOLTINN, the name of a district in the Parish of Kirk Braddan. It consists of a projection of the mountain Carraghan, the sides whereof [14b] are inclosed by two rivers, which meet at a place called the *Aah-mod* or Dogs'-ford. [2. Qu, now *Ballatnoddey?* ED.] This river is afterwards called White river, and falls into another called the Black river; below the junction of which is the town of Douglass, deriving its name from the union of the *Doo* (black) and the *Glass* (grey) rivers. In the centre of Baaltinn is a small village called *Aal-caer* or Baal's town. Adjoining to *Aal-caer* are the ruins of an old Temple, called *Kil Amman* (*Cella Ammonis*). [About 18 x 12 feet. On the site of these ruins the Chapel of St. Luke was built, A.D. 1836. ED.] Near to this was an ancient Tynwald or *Tinn-Vaal*, i.e., the altar or fire of Baal, where all new Laws were promulged, and the seats of the 24 Keys or Parliament of the Island are still pointed out. Here was a pillar with an

inscription, as I have been often told, but it was carried off and broken to mend a neighbouring stone wall. This Tinn Vaal was coeval with another on Croncurley, in the north side of the Island; as at that time the Island was under two Governments, and the distinctions of North-side and South-side still remain. But when Man came to be under one Government, the present Tinn Vaal, or Tennual, or Tynwald, as being more central, was erected, and the Chapel (dedicated to St. John the Baptist, on whose festival the Tinn-Vaal is annually held), was appropriated to the religious services which the meetings at Tinn-vaal might require. A fair was, however, held at the old Tinn-Vaal in Baal-tinn, until lately. There is an opinion in this part of the country that the church commonly called Kil Ammon should be named Kil Abban, or the Abbott's Church; and that it was either built, at the introduction of Christianity into the Island, on the ruins of Baal's temple, or that the Pagan Kil Ammon was then converted into the Christian Kil Abban. It is certain, however, that at a very early period the village of Aalcaer received the name of Balla Chreest, Christ's town; but has not retained it in use, tho' it is so called hi the Records. The high-road to Kil Ammon is called the Paad Jiarg (red road). About a mile to the south of this Tinn Vaal is Balla-vriw, the Judge's Town, which, as well as part of Aalcaer, is the property of the family of Kelly, [the Rev. Doctor's family.—*Ed.*] who most probably were Judges or Druids of that religious and judicial institution. [15a] The adjoining town or balla is called *Baal-ny-moddey*, the town of Dogs; and higher up the valley another town is called *Aah Whuallian* or the whelp's ford. I mention these names, as the modern believers in the God Belus are of opinion that these dogs in their respective stations were the guards of the sacred Tinn-vaal, Baal-tinn, or fire of Baal. On St. Stephen's day the inhabitants of this district assemble to hunt the little Wren, which, when caught and killed, they fasten to the top of a long pole and cany about in procession, with drums beating, and colours flying, and distribute for money the feathers of the bird, which are esteemed by the purchasers to be a charm against all evils for the ensuing year. So far is common with the practice of other parts of the Island; but in Baaltinn the body of the naked Wren is deposited with much solemnity in Kil Ammon, and the evening concludes with a variety of games on the open ground which adjoins. While some think this to be an emblem of the change from human sacrifices to those of beasts in the offerings of Baal, others think, with apparently more reason, that it is a superstitious memorial of the death of the saint. It may be right in this place to explain the reason why Baal-tinn and Tinn Vaal are supposed to be the same word, and to mean the same thing. *Bealtuinne* is of Irish origin, and *Tinn-vaal* of Manks, as being peculiar to the Isle of Man; for whenever or generally when two substantives are put in apposition, the Irish place that word first, which the Manks put last, as Irish *ailtcheangal* is in Manks *kiangley-olt*, *buidhembios* is *mee-vuigh*, July, *lhongphort*, a harbour, *purt-lhong* or *ihuingys*. Ir. *saix-vheurla*, *baarl-sausinagh*. M'Curtin also, author of the Irish Dictionary explains *Bealtuinne* by *Teinne Bheil*, and by *Teinne Bheluis*. But should *Tinn veal* and *Baal tinn* be the same,

and both signify Baal's altar and fire, and the court where new laws were promulged, there will be a difficulty in accounting for the Icelandic, "*Althing*, or common court of justice, which is kept every year on the 8th of July, at Thing-Valla."* For though the Icelandic names and their uses resemble those of the Celtic; yet we cannot think them of Celtic origin. Here, then, is a field of curious inquiry for the learned antiquarian. (*Ir. Bealtuinne; lat. Appollinis ignis*, for *teinn* or *teinney* [I5b] fire, is *eign* or *eigney* without the *t*, which is added because of the word beginning with a vowel; therefore *ignis* is of the same Celtic origin.

* Von Troil's Letters on Iceland, p. 72.

BAALTIN

[I5b] BAALTINN (LAA), s. May-day, or the day of Baal's fire, or of the Sun, from *tinn* celestial fire, and *Baal* the god Baal, or the Sun. On this day [the eve of this day.—ED.] the inhabitants kindle fires on the summits of the highest hills, in continuation of the practice of the Druids, who made the cattle, and probably "the children, to pass through the fire," using certain ceremonies to expiate the sins of the people; but the modern practice is, for each balla or town to kindle a fire, so that the wind may drive the smoke over their corn fields, cattle and habitations. Which custom, independent of the religious use, might have a temporal benefit also in view, by killing the insects which infest the trees and corn at that season. It is also the usage to put out the culinary fires on that day, and to rekindle them with some of the sacred fire. On this day, likewise, the young people of different districts form themselves into two parties, called the Summer and the Winter (*Sourey as Geurey*), and having appointed a place of meeting, a mock engagement takes place, when the winter party gradually recedes before the summer, and at last quits the field. There is an appropriate song, the burden of which is, *Hug eh my fainey; sourey lhien, &c.* ["*He gave my ring; summer with us,*" &c. I can make no sense of this.—ED.] On this day, and also on Laa Sourey (the first of November), malefactors were punished with death by fire, and human sacrifices were offered to Baal; which, however, both at Carthage and in Ireland, according to the ancient historians, were laid aside, and the sacrifice of beasts substituted in their stead. Val. Gr. 124. On May-eve, the inhabitants dress their houses with flowers, and before every door a considerable space is strewed with primroses; and crosses are made of mountain-ash (*caorin*), which are fastened to their cattle and worn by themselves as preservatives against witchcraft. On this eve also the damsel places a snail between two pewter dishes, and expects to find next morning the name of her future husband in visible characters on the dish; but the success of this depends on her watching until midnight, and having first purified her hands and face by washing them in the dew of wheat.

BAALAN

[15b] BAALAN, *s.* the plant — (?) a fillet, a chaplet. This plant is gathered on [16a] Midsummer-eve, and made into chaplets, or circles, which are worn on the head of man and beast, to preserve them against witchcraft and evil. The word is literally Baal's chaplet, from *an* the circle or ring, and *Baal* of Baal; in commemoration of Baal or the Sun, the god of the Celts, having completed his circle or course. When I say in commemoration of Baal, I do not mean to say that the people have any traditional memory of Baal, or consciousness of celebrating, in this and the preceding articles, any religious ceremony to him. These acts arise from immemorial usage, without any knowledge of their origin annexed to them; but the most ancient Irish historians, and many learned Celtic scholars, believe and maintain that the ceremonies alluded to are the remains of the heathen worship paid by the Druids and the Celtic nations to their god Baal. *Ir. mallan, or malan; W. banal, broom.*

BAALAN-FEAIL-OIN

[16a] BAALAN-FEAIL-OIN, *s.* the chaplet made of the plant — (?) and worn on the eve of St John the Baptist. The literal etymology of the word is, *An* a chaplet, *Baal* of Baal, *feailley* on the feast *Eoin* of John. [*Bollan-y-feail-oin*, which the inhabitants gather and keep in their houses on account of its medicinal properties.—ED.]

BLEIN

[24a] BLEIN, *s. pl.* BLEEANTYN, *gen.* BLEEANEY, a year; as in *arragh ny bleeaney; car ny bleeaney*. It is compounded of *Baalan*, i.e., the circle of Baal or the Sun; or according to others, of *Baal-di-ain*, the circle of the god Baal. On the first day of November a fire was kindled on some eminence to summon the Druids to meet, in order to sacrifice to Baal Samen (*Ir. Samhan*), or *Soun*, and the day was called *laa souney*. Valancey says the Celts began their year with January; yet in the Isle of Man the first of November is called New Year's day by the Mummers, who, on the eve, begin their petition in these words: "To-night is New Year's night, *Hog-unnaa, &c., &c.*" (*Lat. Baal-dei-annus.*) (Perhaps, *hog-un-naa* is *hoc vel hie annus novus.*)

BOLLAN-FEAILL'EOIN

[27a] BOLLAN-FEAILL'EOIN, *s.* the herb mugwort; a chaplet of which is worn on St John the Baptist's day. [See *Baalan*.

CAAYR

[35a] CAAYR, *s. pl.* YN. an old word for habitation, abode, dwelling-place, city, as in the proper name, *aal-caayr*, the city or place of Baal, q.v., also a chair, a seat, often pronounced *chaayr*.

ÇHENNEY

[41a] ÇHENNEY, or TIENNEY, *s. pl* ÇHENTYN. fire, ether, pure elementary fire, not that culinary fire which we call AILE, or that which appears in ignited bodies. This is that TIEN or TIENNEY which our ancestors worshipped, not ultimately or for itself, but relatively to the SUPREME BEING, for they supposed GOD to be present in the fire; though the practice of men might, in length of time, degenerate from the original institution and rest in the object of sense, and, like Cain, introduce the worship of the sun, as the best resemblance he could find of the glory of the Lord, who was wont to appear in a flaming light. A notion of something divine in fire prevailed in the most distant times and places, even among the Chinese, who make TIEN, ether or heaven, the sovereign cause of all things, and adore it under the name of Tien. The Greeks and all the Eastern nations consider the sun as the spirit of the world. The Romans had their *Vesta*, the Egyptians their *Vulcan*, and our Celtic grandsires their Baal or Bel-Çhin or Tien. (*Cor. Arm. and W. tân*, anciently *Ir. teine*.)

ÇHENNEY-BAALTIN

[41a] ÇHENNEY=BAALTIN, *s.* St. John's or midsummer fire.

EAYST

[71a] EAYST, *s. pl.* YN. the moon. *Ta'n eayst goll er e dreeym*, to set. This word is only in common use in the Island, It is the Hesus of the Druids, which, with *Baal*, *uthan* or *grian*, the Sun, were the principal Gods of the Druids. *Lucan, Divis altaribus Hesus*.

FALLEAYS

[78a] FALLEAYS, *s. pl.* YN. a gleam of light; also, a ray of the sun. This word comes from *Baal-ys* or *Vaal-ys*, the issuing of *Baal*, the sun; as *soll-ys*, the light of the sun.

FEAILOIN

[80a] FEAILOIN, Midsummer-day, the feast of St. John the Baptist, from *feailley* and *Eoin*, on which day a circle or chaplet of the plant bollan or baalan is worn. See *baalan*.

GRIAN

[101a] GRIAN, *s. fem.* the sun, *ta'n ghrian yial er chooilleen e jurnah. P. C. (Ir. grian.)* The sun was anciently worshipped by the Celts under the name of Bel, Beal, Baal, Boal, or Beul; (vid. *bealtin*.) and by the Greeks under the name of Apollo, which differs very little in the sound. He was called *Grian* from *grianey* or *grianagh*, to bask, heat or scorch, which word was latinized into *Grynæus* and *Grannus*, and became a

classical epithet of Apollo. In Camden we meet with an inscription found in Scotland, dedicated Appollini Granno; in Manks, *Boal* or *Poal Grianagh*.

His tibi Grynaei nemoris dicatur origo.

Ne quia sit lucas, quo se plus jactet

Apollo. Ec. 6.

LAA-BAALTIN

[116a] LAA-BAALTIN, the first of May, or St. Philip and James. *Vid. baaltin*.

TINN-VAAL

[182a] TINN-VAAL, *s. pr.* name, Tinwald-hill, as it is usually called. It is supposed to signify ahead of earth and stones, which assumed the appearance of a hill. The word literally signifies the fire of Baal, the place of the fire or Altar of Baal. The Tinwald, or Court of the Tinwald, was anciently held in the central situation, in the parish of Kirk Braddan, called *Baaltinn*, for the south part of the Island, while the *Tinn-vaal*, for the north side, was at *Knock-Urley*. In Baaltinn are still the remains of an old temple, which, at the time of the introduction of Christianity, was converted into a church, and dignified by the name of *Keeill Abban*—i.e., the Abbot's Church. The Tinwald is at present held at St. John's Chapel, near Peel, upon St. John's Day, when all new laws are promulgated in the open [182b] air, in the presence of the people, three times, before they have the force of Law. There is a striking resemblance between the Gallic *Tinvaal* and the Icelandic *Thingvalla*. All causes in Iceland are first decided at the *Harad's Thing*, or County-court, from which the parties concerned may appeal to the *Al-thing*, or Common Court of Justice, which is kept every year, on the 8th of July, at *Thing-valla*. *Von Trail's Letters on Iceland*. London, 1780, p. 72. See *Baaltinn*. The Rev. W. Fitzimmons has the following note after Tinn Vaal: "*Tynwald* is *ting*, a court, and *wall*, a hillock, or mount, or mote, the court mote."

