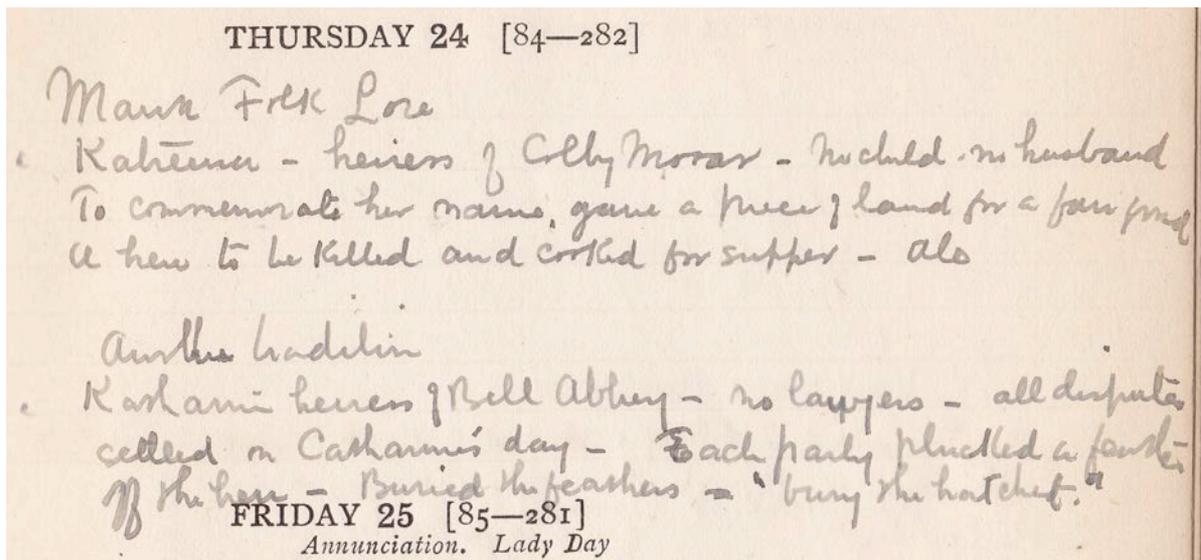


STEPHEN MILLER

“KIARK CATREENEY MARROO”  
CATHERINE’S HEN IS DEAD



COLBY FAIR  
6 DECEMBER

“Catherine’s Hen is dead  
The head take thou, and I the feet  
And we shall put her under ground”

CHIOLLAGH BOOKS  
FOR  
CULTURE VANNIN  
2018

## INTRODUCTION



“I believe that the ‘Kiark Catreeny Marroo’ procession—by the bye tomorrow is the day for it—is one of the oldest of our national customs. Much older than ‘Hunt the Wren’ & the ‘White Boys.’” [MS6] So wrote Dr John Clague to W.H. Gill on 5 December 1894, about the calendar custom known simply as Kiark Catreeny Marroo (‘Catherine’s Hen is Dead’). Clague’s *Coinaghtyn Manninagh: Manx Reminiscences* ([1911]) provides the fullest description of the custom when on the day of Colby Fair, the 6 December [P6]:

[t]he men and young boys of the neighbourhood would kill a hen, and they would walk two and two, holding the hen between them, and other persons would walk two and two through the fair with their hats off, as if they would be at a funeral, and sing,

“Katherine’s hen is dead.

You take the head and I shall take the feet,

And we shall put her under the ground.”

This was the cue for copious alcohol consumption and “[a] wake was kept over the hen, and early the next day the men went to ‘peel the hen.’” This involved the following:

The head and the feet were cut off, and they were buried. It gave them an opportunity to get a little drop on the next day. Any one who went to the public-house on the day after the fair, people said “He is going to peel the hen.”

Those who had over indulged were said to have “plucked a feather from the hen” [P1], [P2], [P3], [N2] or had “plucked the good hen last night” [P4].

It is again Clague who provides a back story to the custom itself [P6]:

There was an old story about Katherine, heiress of Colby Mooar. She was not married, and she wished her name to be remembered in times to come, and to do this she gave a piece of a field for a fair-ground for the feast of St Katherine, whose church was on her estate, and a hen was to be killed, and plenty of ale to be drunk at the feast. [P5]

This passage was written up from a manuscript note [MS4]:

Manx Folk Lore

Katreena—heiress of Colby Mooar—no child—no husband

To commemorate her name, gave a piece of land for a fair ground

A hen to be killed and cooked for supper—Ale.

Clague also gives a rationale for the events of the day itself [P6]:

## INTRODUCTION

There is another story, that before there were any attorneys, the people of Colby Mooar put aside all their fallings out that were between them at the feast of St Katherine, and that each party would peel some of the feathers and bury them, and the case was settled.

And the note that Clague made on the above [MS4]:

Another tradition

Katharine heiress of Bell Abby—no lawyers—all disputes settled on Catherine’s day— Each party plucked a feather off the hen—Buried the feathers = “bury the hatchet.”

Returning to his account of the day’s proceedings itself, he writes of his source of information, “I have heard an old man say that his mother kept a public house, and she had told him that the men ....” [P6] Clague was born in 1842 and his father farmed Ballanorris in Arbory, but does not draw upon any eye-witness account of his own.

Besides Clague [MS4], [MS5], [MS6], [MS7], [P6], the only other folklorists who provide accounts are John Rhys [P1], (repeated [P5]), A.W. Moore, [P2], (repeated [P3], [N2]), and Karl Roeder [P4]. Moore’s material is likely that passed on to him by Rhys, and Roeder simply records “[t]he short ditty which used to be sung at Colby fair.” [P4].

As regards this ditty collected by others besides (1) Roeder [P4], (2) Rhys records one taken down from Henry Watterson (1816–94), of Colby on 18 September 1888 [MS2], and one again on the same date from Edward Faragher (1803–90), residing at Cregneash in the parish of Rushen [MS3], with a version published in [P1] (repeated [P5]); (3) Moore’s version [P2] (repeated [N2]) will be from Rhys; (4) Clague [P6] is taken from [MS7] (a separate manuscript from the source of [MS4]). Dating from 1872, and with the first line altered to read as *Kiark y Treen e Marrow!* (“The Hen of the Treen is dead!”) [N1] in order to support a spurious argument on another topic, is the first mention as such of the custom.

W.H. Gill was much exercised over the tune to *Kiark Catreeny Marroo* was sung, writing to his brother, Deemster J.F. Gill in 1894, “you might deliberate with the Doctor as to the fate of the tune with the title ‘*Kiark Catreeny Marroo*’ It is a nice point for you to settle, viz. Is it Manx or Scotch?” [MS5] On this matter, Clague was somewhat indifferent, replying to the Deemster, “[a]s to *Kiark Catreeny Marroo* I think it is an old Gaelic tune and is as much Manx as it is Irish and Scotch.” [MS6] Gill had the tune to hand, hence the occasion of his letter, and this had been supplied to him by Clague [T2], of which no copy is present in the Clague tune books now in the MNHL as MS 448/I–3 A and MS 449 B. What does exist, however, is an arrangement made by Clague of the tune and found in MS 449 B. [JCI] Moore published a harmonised version of the tune in his *Manx Ballads and Music* (1896), the original of which had been collected by Annie Gell of Castletown (incidentally a

cousin of the Gills) from John Bridson (1841–1921), a tenant farmer living on the Cloughbane Road in Colby. [T1]

Rhys wrote in 1892, “[w]hen I heard of this fair in 1888, it was in temporary abeyance on account of a lawsuit respecting the plot of ground on which the fair is wont to be held; but I was told that it usually began with a procession, in which a live hen is carried about: this is called St Catherine’s hen.” [P1], [MS2] He continued that “[t]he next day the hen is carried about dead and plucked, and a rhyme pronounced at a certain point in the proceeding contemplates the burial of the hen, but whether that ever took place I know not.” He seems to have misinterpreted the phrase of someone having “plucked a feather from the hen” as being literal (“it would seem that there must be such a scramble to get at the hen, and to take part in the plucking”) rather than a simple reference to the drunken state of those at Colby Fair. As seen, Rhys collected the rhyme in September 1888, and this information must have come from his two informants (Faragher and Watterson) and so he is the only other folklorist besides Clague to furnish a description as such of the proceedings that day, though again he was not an eye-witness himself.

The dispute over Colby Fair took place in 1885, and Watterson was the central figure on the day that year, breaking the lock on the gate that barred access to the field where the fair was traditionally held and letting the good folk of Colby in. He had been called upon in his official capacity as Captain of the Parish to allow the fair to go ahead. This led to a court case for trespass in 1886, curiously one not reported in the newspapers, and picked up again in 1887 (which was covered by the papers of the times), there being a final verdict in 1888. Judging from what Rhys wrote, the fair had not taken place either in 1886 or 1887. Regardless of this detail, the court cases generated considerable newspaper coverage and the legal record has the 1886 case present with the depositions from witnesses. Whilst the case revolved about the field used for the fair and there was a clear legal right for Colby Fair to be held where it was, and so no need to draw upon tradition as such, nevertheless, there not a single mention even in passing of Kiark Catreeny Marroo.

Whilst his letter to one of the Gills in 1894 [MS6] suggests that the custom was being carried out, by this date Colby Fair was a shadow of its former self. In the year before Clague wrote to Gill about Colby Fair, the *Isle of Man Times* in 1893, carried a report of the day when “[m]ilch cows sold freely at from £14 to £16; stores from £6 to £8,” adding, “there was no demand for horses.” [A3/I] The expected trappings of the fair were missing, as “[t]here was not a single tent for use of sale of intoxicating liquors, nor was there a sweet stall for the children.” The police presence of a sergeant and three constables found nothing to occupy themselves with, and finally, “[t]he fair concluded at 3.30.”

In 1900, the day’s proceedings were summed up in a simple two line report in the *Manx Sun*: “Colby Fair took place on Thursday at the ancient Fair ground. A good few men were present with cattle, but little business was done.” [A3/4] The *Isle of*

*Man Examiner* carried more detail and spoke of there being “a meagre attendance,” both of livestock and of people, “[s]ome half-dozen horses and score of head of cattle comprised the stock on offer, and about fifty men, five ladies, and two constables were present.” [A3/5] There was little trade that day, and the topics of conversation were the price and state of the corn market, and “a general bewailing that so famous a fair should have so far decayed.” The past glory of the fair was recalled:

Once upon a time—and not so long ago as so fable-like phrase might suggest—Colby was crowded on the night preceding the fair by itinerant vendors of all sorts of goods. On St Catherine’s Day the Bell Abbey field was crowded with tents for boots, clothing, iron mongery, and every possible commodity—not omitting sweetstuffs and *jough*. The whole southside took holiday, and the joviality proceeded far into the night.

That was then and this was now:

Now, however, the rail, post, telegraph and telephone have destroyed the value of such an institution, and only a few gather, from sentiment of curiosity, with just a sprinkling of sellers to keep the day alive.

The next year, 1901, the weather was not of the best as “the Clerk of the Weather was not in the same genial humour as last year,” and “the climatic conditions relapsed into the watery state which usually obtains on old St Catherine’s Day.” [A3/6] The *Examiner* carried on reporting in the same vein as in the previous year: “[t]his fair makes a gallant struggle for existence, and this year a dozen or so of sheep and a septet of kine were offered for sale, some of which changed owners.” Again it reflected on the fair as was, “when, in addition to sales, &c., the arranging and engaging of crews for the next year’s fishing created much stir and commotion, which often lingered far into the night.” That same year, the *Manx Sun* kept up its succinct record of the proceedings [A3/7]:

Little or no business was done at Colby Fair this year. All that was evident in that ancient Fair Ground were about half-a-dozen cattle and sheep; with the same number of men, two policemen, and a few boys.

The last report of the fair comes in 1902, when, according to the *Examiner*, “[t]here was a fair attendance of the public, but a dozen or so of cattle, a few colts, and some sheep were all that were offered for sale,” going on to comment in mock-horror that “[e]ven the sweet stall was absent!” [A3/8] The paper wished the fair well:

Doubtless Colby Fair, seeing that it makes so brave a struggle for existence, would still do well but that the season of the year is all against bringing cattle out to stand in the open for any length of time.

How long it carried on for after this date is unclear, but end it did. None of these accounts mention Kiark Catreaney Marroo at all, especially not the *Examiner* piece from 1900, that reminiscenced over Colby Fair as once it was.

## INTRODUCTION

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In 1892, Rhys had asked “[b]ut why should this ceremony be associated with St Catherine? and what were the origin and meaning of it?” Given as a lecture before the Folk-Lore Society, he called upon those present to have these questions “expounded by the Society,” giving as a reason that he had not “had time to consult Mr Frazer’s *Golden Bough*, in order to see if it gives any close parallel to the proceedings of the good people of Colby.” By 1901, he had presumably had chance to read Frazer, but was still none the wiser, and so the questions remained ones “on which I should be glad to have light shed.”

In order to shed some light, gathered here is the source material drawn from print [P], newspaper [N], and manuscript sources [MS]. This is followed by the texts of the rhyme [S] along with the two tunes known to date [T]. The Appendix consists of (1) Clague’s arrangement of the tune [JC]; (2) a scan of the page from Clague’s notebook with the entries on Kiark Catreeney Marroo (MNHL, MS 952 A); (3) newspaper references to Colby Fair (excluding those relating to the dispute of 1885).

STEPHEN MILLER, 2018



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- MS 449 B        Dr John Clague tune books (No. 4).
- MS 450/5 A      Notebooks on various topics compiled by Dr John Clague, undated.
- MS 952 A        "Manx Folk Lore," notebook compiled by Dr John Clague, undated [1892 or after].

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COMPLETED IN 1895 & 1896.  
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Letter from W.H. Gill to Deemster J.F. Gill, 27 November 1894  
—— Dr John Clague to ——, 5 December 1894.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

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THE COLBY FAIR DISPUTE

(1885–88)

1885

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MARK CATRENEY MARRO  
CATHERINE'S HEN IS DEAD

COLBY FAIR  
6 DECEMBER

\*

SOURCE MATERIAL

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## PRINTED REFERENCES



[P1] JOHN RHYS, “MANX FOLK-LORE AND SUPERSTITIONS” [1888] (FROM 1892)

[77] When I heard of this fair in 1888, it was in temporary abeyance on account of a lawsuit respecting the plot of ground on which the fair is wont to be held; but I was told that it usually began with a procession, in which a live hen is carried about: this is called St Catherine’s hen. The next day the hen is carried about dead and plucked, and a rhyme pronounced at a certain point in the proceeding contemplates the burial of the hen, but whether that ever took place I know not. It runs thus:

“Kiark Catrina<sup>1</sup> marroo,  
Gows<sup>2</sup> yn kione, as goyms ny cassyn  
As vermayd ee fo’n thaloo.”

<sup>1</sup> Catreeny. <sup>2</sup> Gow uss.

‘Catherine’s hen is dead;  
The head take thou, and I the feet,  
And we shall put her under ground.’

A man who is found to be not wholly sober after the fair is locally said to have plucked a feather from the hen (‘T’eh er goaill fedjag ass y chiark’); so it would seem that there must be such a scramble to get at the hen, and to take part in the plucking, that it requires a certain amount of drink to allay the thirst of the over-zealous devotees of St Catherine. But why should this ceremony be associated with St Catherine? and what were the [78] origin and meaning of it? These are questions which I should be glad to have expounded by the Society, for I have not had time to consult Mr Frazer’s *Golden Bough*, in order to see if it gives any close parallel to the proceedings of the good people of Colby.

John Rhys, “Manx Folk-Lore and Superstitions, ii,” *Folklore*, iii.1 (1892), 74–88, see 77–78. See too, [P4].

[P2] A.W. MOORE, *THE FOLK-LORE OF THE ISLE OF MAN* (1891)

[126] December 6th.—*Laa’l Catreeny*, “Catherine’s Feast-day” (old style). On, or about, this day possession must be taken on the South side of the Island of lands, when there is a change of [127] occupier. A fair was held on this day in the Parish of Arbory, when the following curious distich was repeated:

“Kiark Catreeny marroo,  
Gow’s y kione.  
As goyms ny cassyn,

As ver mayd ec fo'n thalloo.”

‘Catherine’s hen is dead,  
Take thou the head,  
And I will take the feet,  
And we will put her under ground.’

If any one got drunk at the fair he was said to have “plucked a feather of the hen.”

A.W. Moore, *The Folk-lore of the Isle of Man* (Douglas & London: David and Son & David Nutt, 1891), 126. See too, [N2].

[P3] A.W. MOORE, *MANX BALLADS AND MUSIC* (1896)

[xxi] The quaint distich, “Kiark Katreeney Marroo,”<sup>1</sup> “Katherine’s Hen is Dead,” was formerly sung at a fair held on the 6th of December, this being *Laa’l Katreeney*, “Katherine’s Feast Day,” at Colby, in the parish of Arbory. Those who sang it got possession of a hen which they killed and plucked, and, after carrying it about, buried. If any one got drunk at the fair it was said “T’eh er goaill fedjag ass y chiark,” “He has plucked a feather from the hen.”

<sup>1</sup> It is probably merely a fragment. The Rev. T.E. Brown suggests that Kiark should be Kiarkle “circle,” and that the rhyme was originally a religious one referring to the martyrdom of St. Katherine.

A.W. Moore, “Introduction,” *Manx Ballads and Music* (Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896), xiv–xxx, see xxi with fn. [6].

[P4] KARL ROEDER, “CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FOLK LORE OF THE ISLE OF MAN” (1897)

LA’AL CATREENEY, 6 DECEMBER

[189] St Catherine was the patroness of the field workers, and I have already alluded to this day for men vagrant servants (under chapter of St Columba’s Eve). The short ditty which used to be sung at Colby fair was given to me thus:

“Kiark Catreeney maroo,  
Gow uss ny cassyn, as goym’s yn kione,  
As ver mayd ee fo’n thalloo.”

And if a man got too jolly over the mug it was said of him: “Ren eh plucky yn kiark mie riyr” (‘He plucked the good hen last night’), which differs a little from Moore’s and Professor Rhys’ version.

Charles Roeder, “Contributions to the Folk Lore of the Isle of Man,” *Yn Lioar Manninagh*, iii.iv (1897), 129–91, see 189.

[P5] JOHN RHYS, *CELTIC FOLKLORE WELSH AND MANX, I* (1901)

[335] From the less known saints Boltane and Santane I wish to pass to the mention of a more famous one, namely, St Catherine, and this because of a fair called after her, and held on the sixth day of December at the village of Colby in the south of the island. When I heard of this fair in 1888, it was in temporary abeyance on account of a lawsuit respecting the plot of ground on which the fair is wont to be held; but I was [336] told that it usually begins with a procession, in which a live hen is carried about: this is called St Catherine's hen. The next day the hen is carried about dead and plucked, and a rhyme pronounced at a certain point in the proceedings contemplates the burial of the hen, but whether that ever takes place I know not. It runs thus:

“Kiark Catrina marroo:  
Gows yn kione as goyms ny cassyn,  
As ver mayd ee fo'n thaloo.”

‘Catherine's hen is dead:  
The head take thou and I the feet,  
We shall put her under the ground.’

A man who is found to be not wholly sober after the fair is locally said to have plucked a feather from the hen (*T'eh er goaill fedjag ass y chiark*); so it would seem that there must be such a scramble to get at the hen, and to take part in the plucking, that it requires a certain amount of drink to allay the thirst of the over zealous devotees of St Catherine. But why should this ceremony be associated with St Catherine? and what were the origin and meaning of it? These are questions on which I should be glad to have light shed.

John Rhys, *Celtic Folklore: Welsh and Manx*, vol. i, 2 vols (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1901), 335–36.

[P6] DR JOHN CLAGUE,† COOINAGHTYN MANNINAGH (N.D. [BUT 1911])

[43] There was an old story about Katherine, heiress of Colby Mooar. She was not married, and she wished her name to be remembered in times to come, and to do this she gave a piece of a field for a fair-ground for the feast of St Katherine, whose church was on her estate, and a hen was to be killed, and plenty of ale to be drunk at the feast.

There is another story, that before there were any attorneys, the people of Colby Mooar put aside all their fallings out that were between them at the feast of St Katherine, and that each party would peel (pluck) some of the feathers and bury them, and the case was settled.

[45] I have heard an old man say that his mother kept a public house, and she had told him that the men and young boys of the neighbourhood would kill a hen, and

they would walk two and two, holding the hen between them, and other persons would walk two and two through the fair with their hats off, as if they would be at a funeral, and sing,

“Katherine’s hen is dead.

You take the head and I shall take the feet,

And we shall put her under the ground.”

They would then go to the public-house and get plenty of ale.

A wake was kept (held) over the hen, and early the next day the men went to “peel the hen.”

The head and the feet were cut off, and they were buried. It gave them an opportunity to get a little drop on the next day. Any one who went to the public-house (tavern) on the day after the fair, people said “He is going to peel the hen.”

Dr John Clague,† *Coinaghtyn Manninagh: Manx Reminiscences By the Late Dr John Clague* (Castletown: M.J. Backwell, n.d. [but 1911]), 43 & 45.

**Notes:** (1) Facing pages of Manx and English. The latter only here reproduced. (2) For the manuscript source, see [MS4].



## NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS



[N1] MANX SUN (16 MARCH 1872)

[5c] Indeed it is at this point of Manx history we should properly introduce the legend of the [5d] “Kiark y Treen e Marrow!” &c.,—“The Hen of the Treen is dead!”—adopted and transformed by the new framers into “St Catherine’s Hen is dead!” the sound being nearly the same.

Pseud [signed “Geyrragh”], “The Dog in Bishop Simon’s Grave,” *Manx Sun* 16 March 1872, 5c–d.

[N2] ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (29 MAY 1909)

[5g] It is interesting, too, to note that the men servants’ hiring day (October 11th), on which there were perhaps some Pagan celebrations, has been dedicated to St Michael; that the day on which possession was taken of lands in the South of the Island, on December 6th, is now dedicated to St Catherine, and that the same event on the North of the Island, which takes place on the 11th of December, is named after St Andrew. The second of these dates was also the day of a Pagan sacrificial feast, all remembrance of which has not yet departed, as within living memory the following distich was repeated on that day:

Kiark Catreeney marroo,  
Gow’s y kione,  
As goyms ny cassyn,  
As ver mayd ee fo’n thalloo.

Catherine’s hen is dead,  
Take thou the head,  
And I will take the feet,  
And we will put her under ground.

Anyone attending the fair held on that day, who took too much to drink, was said to have “plucked a feather of the hen.”

A.W. Moore, “The November–May Year in Man,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 29 May 1909, 5f–h, see 5g. See too, [P2].

[N3] ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (15 SEPTEMBER 1939)

## The Professor and the Phynnodderee—No. 31



**CATHERINE'S HEN.**—The Professor sighed, "Kiark Catreeney Marroo—Catherine's hen is dead, and Catherine's Fair is gone, too! Even the tradition of many of these old fairs is dying now."—"Kate's hen is dead," sang the Phynnodderee, "Take thou the head, and I will take the foot. While under ground she's put."—"Bless me," said the Professor, "What an interesting bequest was that of the heiress of Colby Mooar! Let me see, she left the ground for the fair, the hen to be killed, and the ale to be drunk. Comprehensive, at least. Then, there's that curious expression, to 'pluck a feather from Catherine's hen.' I wonder what its exact meaning is!"—The Phynnodderee winked solemnly, "You'll get leave," he said. "It's like it comes from the ale she supplied. They might be plucking the feathers for all, but there'd be lashings of ale, and I'm remembering there's the Chibbyr Catreeney at Colby, too, man."—"Chibbyr Catr—Oh, I see," chuckled the Professor. "Catherine's Well, of which it is said, that whoever drinks from it, develops an unquenchable thirst!"

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§2 NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS

“The Professor and the Phynnodderee—No 31,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 15 September 1939, 7c–e. **Notes:** (1) Taking the female in the hooded cape to be Katherine, the heiress of Colby Mooar, or any other female for that matter, it is difficult to see just why they would be shocked at the sight of a plucked hen as so depicted.



### §3

## MANUSCRIPTS



[MS1] VOYAGE TO, AND TOUR OF ISLE OF MAN FOR 24 DAYS (1799)

Kirk Arbory

near Port Mary & Port Iron people are very hospitable and fond of Dancing &c, particularly at fairs [...]

*Voyage to, and Tour of Isle of Man for 24 days* (1799). MNHL, MS 32 A.  
**Notes:** (1) The author (and party) sailed for Man from Dublin, 28 November 1799 and then left on 22 December for Liverpool. The identity of the writer remains unknown but in trying to join a card game in Douglas he refers to himself as “being a Strange Irishman.” (2) Colby is in Arbory parish and this must likely be a direct reference to Arbory Fair then held annually on 6 December, though as seen here there is no mention of the calendar custom under discussion here.

[MS2] JOHN RHYS, INTERVIEW WITH HENRY WATTERSON (1888) \*

A Fair is [mar'ge / mər'ge] St Catherine's fair at Colby used to be held on the 6th of December and will be again probably (there is a lawsuit about the feild [*sic*] for holding it) and it began with a procession in which a live hen was carried about (and probably killed) and ended (?next day?) by the hen being carried about plucked and dead. A rhyme was used then to the following effect:

Kiark Catr[i:]na 'marroo  
Dous / *Gows yn* [kjøn] as goms *ny* \* cassyn ([kazən])  
As vermayd ([vɛ:rmadʲ]) ee fo'n thalloo  
\* *yn* deleted.

TRANSLATION [GB]

Catherine's hen is dead,  
You take the head and I'll take the feet  
And we'll put her under the ground

Interview with Captain Henry Watterson (1816–94), Colby, Rushen, 18 September 1888. NLW, GB O210 JORHYS A3/9, Box 61, Notebook 6, p.21.

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\* I am grateful to Professor George Broderick for [MS2], [MS3], and [MS7].

[MS3] JOHN RHYNS, INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD FARAGHER (1888)

kjarg ka'tri:na maru,  
 gous a kjɔdn as gɔms nə kazən  
 gow uss y kione as gowym's ny cassyn  
 as vermad i fon t<sup>h</sup>dlu

TRANSLITERATION [GB]

Kiark Katreeney marroo  
 gow uss y kione as gowym's ny cassyn  
 as vermayd ee fo'n thalloo.

TRANSLATION [GB]

Catherine's hen is dead,  
 You take the head and I'll take the feet  
 And we'll put her under the ground

Interview with Edward Faragher [Senior] (1803–90), Cregneash, Rushen,  
 18 September 1888. NLW, GB O210 JORHYS A3/9, Box 61, Notebook 6, p.24.

[MS4] DR JOHN CLAGUE, “MANX FOLK LORE” (UNDATED [1892 OR AFTER])

Manx Folk Lore

Katreena—heiress of Colby Mooar—no child—no husband  
 To commemorate her name, gave a piece of land for a fair ground  
 A hen to be killed and cooked for supper—Ale.

Another tradition

Katharine heiress of Bell Abby—no lawyers—all disputes  
 settled on Catherine's day— Each party plucked a feather  
 off the hen—Buried the feathers = “bury the hatchet.”

“Manx Folk Lore,” notes compiled by Dr John Clague (1842–1908),  
 undated [1892 or after], MNHL, MS 952 A. **Notes:** (1) Material in this  
 notebook subsequently appeared in *Cooïnaghtyn Manninagh: Manx  
 Reminiscences By the Late Dr John Clague* (Castletown: M.J. Backwell, n.d.  
 [but 1911]). See [P6].

[MS5] LETTER FROM W.H. GILL TO DEEMSTER GILL (27 NOVEMBER 1894)

Besides the missing pages, which are the only matter that really presses, you might deliberate with the Doctor as to the fate of the tune with the title “Kiark Catreeney Marroo.” It is a nice point for you to settle, viz. Is it Manx or Scotch?

I find it note for note in a book of professedly Scotch Songs. I am afraid we have not a leg to stand on, especially as the tune does not appear in “Mona Melodies.” But

perhaps the Doctor can tell us something of its history. It has a Manx name. How came it by that name? What does it mean? and are there any Manx words to it?

Was it imported by Shepherd. By the way I should like to know more about Shepherd. It is a capital dance tune and I should be sorry to have to exclude it. But the Scotch have appropriated it, and, as we laymen say, “possession is 9 points of the law.”

I shall be curious to know what you make of it.

Letter from W.H. Gill to Deemster Gill, 27 November 1894, MNHL, MS 09702, Box 2. This extract is a clear reading of the text.

[MS6] LETTER FROM DR JOHN CLAGUE TO DEEMSTER GILL (5 DECEMBER 1894)

As to Kiark Catreney Marroo I think it is an old Gaelic tune and is as much Manx as it is Irish and Scotch. I have seen the tune in a collection of Irish airs as well as of Scotch airs, the Irish title being “The ducks dang my daddie”—the Scotch one “The deuks gang o’er my daddie.”

I believe that the “Kiark Catreney Marroo” procession—by the bye tomorrow is the day for it—is one of the oldest of our national customs. Much older than “Hunt the Wren” & the “White Boys.”

Letter from Dr John Clague to Deemster Gill, 5 December 1894, MNHL, MS 09702, Box 2. This extract is a clear reading of the text.

[MS7] DR JOHN CLAGUE NOTEBOOKS (MNHL, MS 450 A) [UNDATED]

Kiark Catreney marroo,  
Gow uss uy kione as gow yms ny cassyn  
As ver mayd ee fo halloo

TRANSLATION [GB]

Catherine’s hen is dead  
You take the head and I’ll take the feet  
And we’ll put it underground

Transcript taken from George Broderick, “Manx Traditional Songs and Song Fragments: ii, Manx Museum MS 450 A,” *Béaloides* 50 (1982), 1–41, see 24. **Notes:** (1) The original is to be found in MNHL, MS 450/5 A, [p.48].



## SONG TEXTS



[1888]

[s1] John Rhys, “Manx Folk-Lore and Superstitions, ii,” *Folklore*, iii.1 (1892), 74–88, see 77 [p1], [p5]. His account dates from 1888. For the two texts in his notebooks, see [ms2] & [ms3].

Kiark Catrina<sup>1</sup> marroo  
 Gows<sup>2</sup> yn kione, as goyms ny cassyn  
 As vermayd ee fo’n thalloo  
<sup>1</sup> Catreeny. <sup>2</sup> Gow uss.

Catherine’s hen is dead  
 The head take thou, and I the feet  
 And we shall put her under ground

1891

[s2] A.W. Moore, *The Folk-lore of the Isle of Man* (Douglas & London: David and Son & David Nutt, 1891), 127 [p2]. Whilst Rhys is not credited as the source, it is likely that the text came from him, see [s1]. As seen, Moore has changed the orthography and altered the lineation. Reproduced in “The November–May Year in Man.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 29 May 1909: 5f–h, see 5g [n2].

Kiark Catreeny maroo  
 Gow’s y kione  
 As goyms ny cassyn  
 As ver mayd ec fo’n thalloo

Catherine’s hen is dead  
 Take thou the head  
 And I will take the feet  
 And we will put her under ground

§4 SONG TEXTS

1897

[s3] Karl Roeder, “Contributions to the Folk Lore of the Isle of Man,” *Yn Lioar Manninagh*, iii.iv (1897), 129–91, see 189 [p3].

Kiark Catreeney maroo  
Gow uss ny cassyn, as goym’s yn kione  
As ver mayd ee fo’n thalloo

[1911]

[s4] Dr John Clague,† *Cooïnaghtyn Manninagh: Manx Reminiscences By the Late Dr John Clague* (Castletown: M.J. Backwell, n.d. [but 1911]), 45 [p6]. For the Manx text in his notebooks, see [ms7].

Kiark Catreeney maroo,  
Gow uss y kione as gow yms ny cassyn  
As ver mayd ee fo halloo

Katherine’s hen is dead  
You take the head and I shall take the feet  
And we shall put her under the ground



A.W. MOORE  
 MANX BALLADS AND MUSIC  
 (1896)



Kiark Katreeney Marroo  
 (Katherine's Hen Is Dead).

*Quickly.*

Kiark Kat-reen - ey mar - roo;....

Gow's y kione, As goyms ny cas-syn, As ver mayd ee fo'n thal-loo....

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Kiark Katreeney Marroo'. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a single treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is marked 'Quickly.' The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 6/8. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The first system ends with an ellipsis, and the second system ends with a double bar line.

[TI] From John Bridson collected by [Annie Gell]. Plate on 227. Plate title: Kiark Katreeney Marroo | (Katherine's Hen Is Dead). A.W. Moore, *Manx Ballads and Music* (Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896).

**JOHN BRIDSON (1841–1921)**

**ROLE** Singer for Annie Gell at some date, “Mr John Bridson, Colby” (MBM xxxiii).

**SONGS** Tunes (×1): Kiark Katreeney.

**1901** Manx & English. *Census Enumerators’ Book* for Arbory 1901, RG 13/5301, fol. 156, sch. 13.

**1891** Farmer (50), born ‘Isle of Man’ [Arbory, 1881 census], living on the Claughbane Road, Colby, with Ann (46), wife, born ‘Isle of Man’. *Census Enumerators’ Book* for Arbory 1891, RG 12/4691, fol. 71, sch. 16.

**1881** Enumerated onboard of CT79 *Eden*, bound for the Irish mackerel fishing. Occupation given as fisherman, census place as Rushen [*ie*, parish of departure], and age as 40. *Census Enumerators’ Book*, Shipping Returns 1881, RG 11/5609, fol. 94.

**BMD** Died 1921 aged 80 and buried in Arbory on 11 September 1921 (Lawson) IOM CIVIL REG, Castletown AI/251 (Manx BMD).

**DIRECTORIES** [Arbory] Tenant farmer, Claughbane (Brown, 1894).

**ANNIE GELL (1854–1908)**

**ROLE** Collector for A.W. Moore at some date during the 1890s, “Miss A. Gell” (MBM xxxiii).

**SONGS** Tunes (×1) from John Bridson: Kiark Katreeney.

**1901** English. *Census Enumerators’ Book* for Castletown 1901, RG 13/5308, fol. 136, sch. 27.

**1891** 37 years old and born in Castletown, residing at 10–11 Bowling Green Road, Castletown with Sir James Gell (68), father, HM Attorney General, born in Douglas; Dame Amelia M. (68), mother, born in German, and siblings, John (39), Attorney General’s secretary; Amy (34); Hugh S. (30), Law student, all born in Castletown. Domestic help: Margaret A. Mitchell (28), cook, born in Liverpool; Sophia Moore (25), parlour maid, born in Arbory; Janie Fitzsimmons (16), under housemaid, born in Liverpool; Emily Taubman (16), kitchen maid, born in Santan. *Census Enumerators’ Book* for Castletown 1891, RG 12/4691, fol. 49, sch. 88.

**1881** ‘Advocate’s daughter’ (27), residing at 3 The Green, Castletown. *Census Enumerators’ Book* for Castletown 1881, RG 11/5607, fol. 62.

**BMD** Died 1908 aged 54 and buried in Malew on 16 May 1908 (Lawson); IOM CIVIL REG, Castletown AI/192 (Manx BMD).

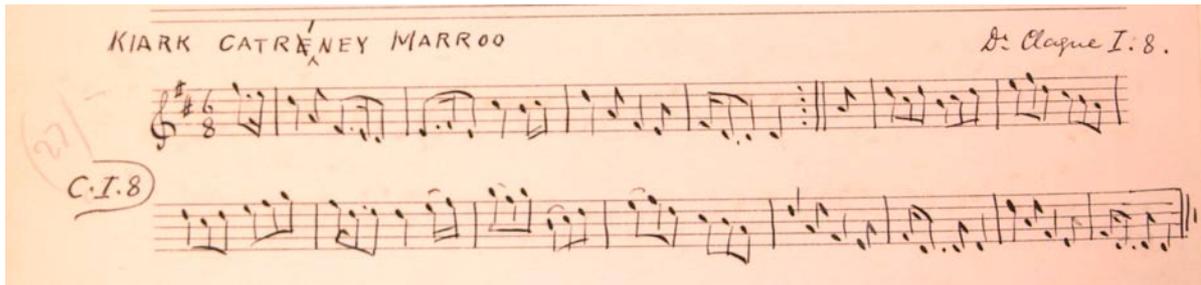
**NOTES** (1) Annie Gell was a cousin to the Gill brothers, her branch of the family having changed its name from Gill to Gell. (2) For her correspondence with W.H. Gill, see MNHL, MD 96–4 to 12 (1908–15). (3) For a version of Yn Graihder Jouyllagh (“The Demon Lover”), endorsed ‘To Miss Gell | with Tho<sup>s</sup> Kelly’s | compliments’, see MNHL, MD 96–13. (4) See too, letter from Hugh Stowell Gill to Annie Gell, 19 December 1891, MD 96–1–1.



## THE DR JOHN CLAGUE COLLECTION



[T2] THE ORIGINAL COLLECTION OF MANX FOLK MUSIC (MNHL, MS 09702)



THE ORIGINAL COLLECTION | OF | MANX FOLK MUSIC | [RULE] | MADE BY | HIS HONOUR  
 THE DEEMSTER GILL | MR W.H. GILL & DR. CLAGUE | COMPLETED IN 1895 & 1896,  
 MNHL, MS 09702, Deemster J.F. Gill Papers, Box 1. Bound up and paginated in 1912  
 by Mrs Lucinda Gill. **Notes:** (1) The manuscript also contains copies of tunes  
 collected by their collaborator, Dr John Clague, and sent on in batches. These have  
 the prefix c followed by the batch number, *ie*, this is the eighth tune from the first  
 batch sent by Clague. (2) The original is not to be found amongst the Dr John  
 Clague tune books, MNHL, MS 448/I-3 A and MS 449 B. (3) The last book contains on  
 p.9 an arrangement of the tune, see [JC].

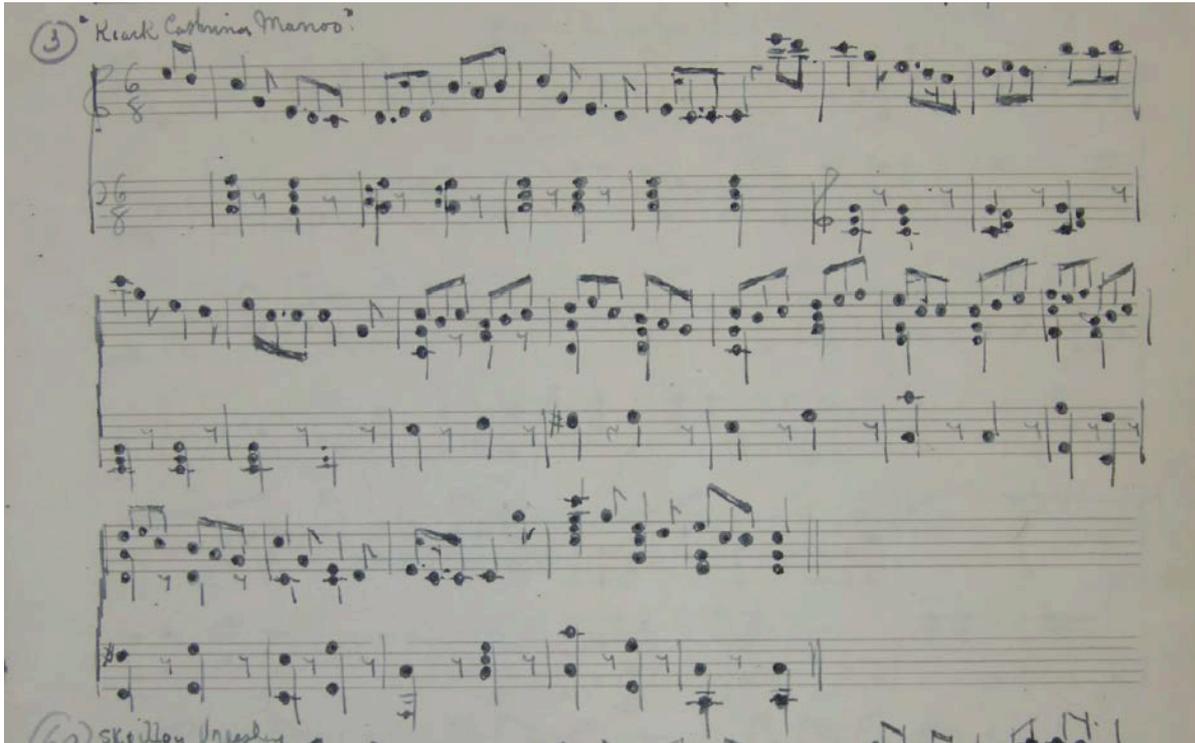


APPENDIX ONE

DR JOHN CLAGUE  
MNHL, MS 449 B



[JC] DR JOHN CLAGUE TUNE BOOKS (MS 449 B)

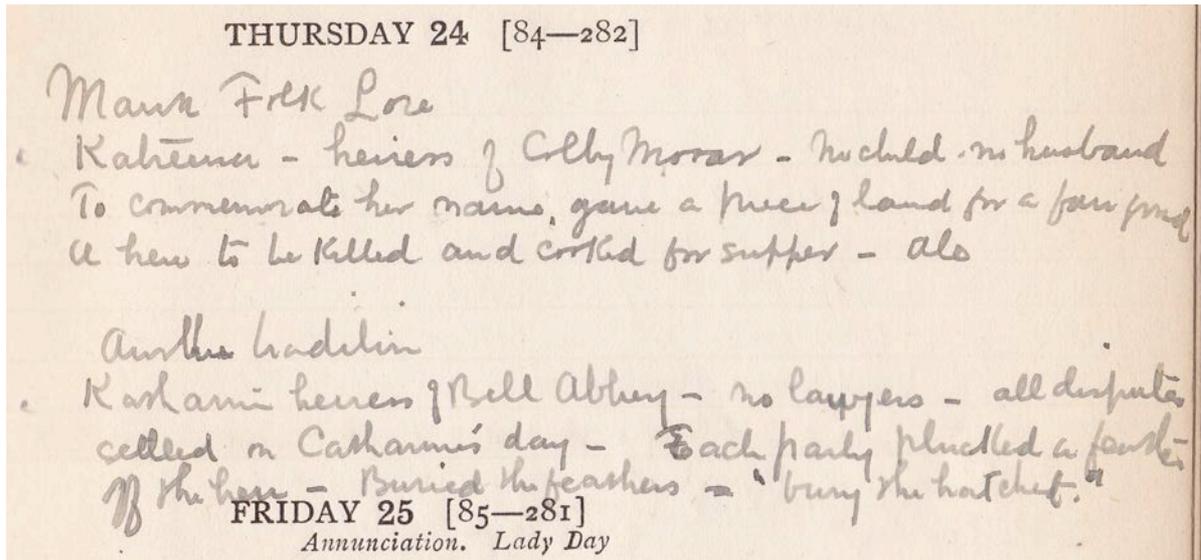


The Dr John Clague Tune Books, MNHL, MS 448/1-3 A and MS 449 B; here MS 449 B, p.9.



APPENDIX TWO

DR JOHN CLAGUE  
MANX FOLK LORE  
MNHL, MS 952 A



Manx Folk Lore

Katreena—heiress of Colby Moorar—no child—no husband  
To commemorate her name, gave a piece of land for a fair ground  
A hen to be killed and cooked for supper—Ale.

Another tradition

Katharine heiress of Bell Abby—no lawyers—all disputes  
settled on Catherine's day— Each party plucked a feather  
off the hen—Buried the feathers = “bury the hatchet.”

“Manx Folk Lore,” notes compiled by Dr John Clague (1842–1908), undated [1892 or after], MNHL, MS 952 A. **Note:** (1) Material in this notebook subsequently appeared in *Cooïnaghtyn Manninagh: Manx Reminiscences By the Late Dr John Clague* (Castletown: M.J. Backwell, n.d. [but 1911]) See [p5].

\*

APPENDIX TWO

\*

COMPARISON BETWEEN MS 952A AND COOINAGHTYN MANNINAGH

(1)

NOTEBOOK

Manx Folk Lore

Katreena—heiress of Colby Mooar—no child—no husband

To commemorate her name, gave a piece of land for a fair ground

A hen to be killed and cooked for supper—Ale.

PUBLISHED

There was an old story about Katherine, heiress of Colby Mooar. She was not married, and she wished her name to be remembered in times to come, and to do this she gave a piece of a field for a fair-ground for the feast of St Katherine, whose church was on her estate, and a hen was to be killed, and plenty of ale to be drunk at the feast.

(2)

NOTEBOOK

Another tradition

Katharine heiress of Bell Abby—no lawyers—all disputes settled on Catherine's day— Each party plucked a feather off the hen—Buried the feathers = "bury the hatchet."

PUBLISHED

There is another story, that before there were any attorneys, the people of Colby Mooar put aside all their fallings out that were between them at the feast of St Katherine, and that each party would peel (pluck) some of the feathers and bury them, and the case was settled.



## APPENDIX THREE

### COLBY FAIR \*



1835

1. “[LOCAL INTELLIGENCE] COLBY FAIR ....” *MONA’S HERALD* (19 DECEMBER 1835)

Colby fair, in the south part of this Island, which took place last week, was numerously attended, and the show of cattle and horses respectable; but the prices offered for them were so discouragingly low that very little business was transacted. The principal transfers of money from hand to hand, seemed to be in the drinking booths, and at the gingerbread stands, both of which appeared to carry on a brisk traffic;—the former with considerable vociferation.

“[Local Intelligence] Colby Fair ....” *Mona’s Herald* 19 December 1835: 5d.

1879

2. “[CASTLETOWN AND THE SOUTH] HIGH BAILIFF’S COURT.” *MONA’S HERALD* (31 DECEMBER 1879)

W. Cain, C.C., against Edward Cubbon, of Arbory, for being drunk and riotous at Colby fair on Tuesday, 9th inst. The offence was proved by PC Quine, and a fine of seven shillings and costs imposed.

“[Castletown and the South] High Bailiff’s Court.” *Mona’s Herald* 31 December 1879: 5b.

1893

3. “[AGRICULTURE, &C] COLBY FAIR.” *ISLE OF MAN TIMES* (9 DECEMBER 1893)

This ancient fair was held on Tuesday, on the Fair ground, at Bell Abbey. The date of holding this fair is not interfered with by the recent revision of the dates of fairs which was inaugurated in Governor Loch’s time, on account of a decision given in the High Court that the owners of the estate on which the fair was formerly held, would not be bound to allow the fair to be held except on the 6th—this date being in the calender called St Catherine’s day. The day being fine a large number of cattle and horses were on the ground. Milch cows sold freely at from £14 to £16; stores from £6 to £8. A nice lot of four beef cattle (the property of Mr Preston, Ballachurry), were sold to Mr Thos. Qualtrough, butcher, Port St Mary, for £60. There was no demand for horses. There was not a single tent for use of sale of

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\* Excluding those directly concerned with the dispute of 1885.

intoxicating liquors, nor was there a sweet stall for the children, who appeared to have a holiday, so that the elders did without their bitters, and the youngsters without their sweets. The peace of the fair was kept by Sergt. Shimmin, of Port St Mary, and three other constables. Their services were not, however, required. The fair concluded at 3.30.

“[Agriculture, &c] Colby Fair.” *Isle of Man Times* 9 December 1893: [5]c.

## 1900

## 4. “[ARBORY] COLBY FAIR ON ....” ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (8 DECEMBER 1900)

Colby Fair on Thursday was this year favoured with dry weather, but there was only a meagre attendance. Some half-dozen horses and score of head of cattle comprised the stock on offer, and about fifty men, five ladies, and two constables were present. Little business was done, the chief topic of conversation having reference to the corn market, and a general bewailing that so famous a fair should have so far decayed. Once upon a time—and not so long ago as so fable-like phrase might suggest—Colby was crowded on the night preceding the fair by itinerant vendors of all sorts of goods. On St Catherine’s Day the Bell Abbey field was crowded with tents for boots, clothing, iron mongery, and every possible commodity—not omitting sweetstuffs and *jough*. The whole southside took holiday, and the joviality proceeded far into the night. Now, however, the rail, post, telegraph and telephone have destroyed the value of such an institution, and only a few gather, from sentiment of curiosity, with just a sprinkling of sellers to keep the day alive.

“[Arbory] Colby Fair on ....” *Isle of Man Examiner* 8 December 1900: 5f.

## 5. “[FROM THE SOUTH SIDE] [ARBORY] COLBY FAIR.” MANX SUN (8 DECEMBER 1900)

Colby Fair took place on Thursday at the ancient Fair ground. A good few men were present with cattle, but little business was done.

“[From the South Side] [Arbory] Colby Fair.” *Manx Sun* 8 December 1900: 8b.

## 1901

## 6. “[ARBORY] COLBY FAIR WAS .....” ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (14 DECEMBER 1901)

Colby Fair was held on Friday week but the Clerk of the Weather was not in the same genial humour as last year, and the climatic conditions relapsed into the watery state which usually obtains on old St Catherine’s Day. This fair makes a gallant struggle for existence, and this year a dozen or so of sheep and a septet of kine were offered for sale, some of which changed owners. Considering everything the fair keeps up well, though very different from the time, when, in addition to sales, &c.,

the arranging and engaging of crews for the next year's fishing created much stir and commotion, which often lingered far into the night.

"[Arbory] Colby Fair was ...." *Isle of Man Examiner* 14 December 1901: 5g.

7. "[ARBORY] COLBY FAIR." *MANX SUN* (14 DECEMBER 1901)

Little or no business was done at Colby Fair this year. All that was evident in that ancient Fair Ground were about half-a-dozen cattle and sheep; with the same number of men, two policemen, and a few boys.

"[Arbory] Colby Fair." *Manx Sun* 14 December 1901: [5]d.

1902

8. "[ARBORY] COLBY FAIR WAS ...." *ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER* (13 DECEMBER 1902)

Colby Fair was held on Saturday last in a field at Belle Abbey. There was a fair attendance of the public, but a dozen or so of cattle, a few colts, and some sheep were all that were offered for sale. Even the sweet stall was absent! However, some sales were effected, and undoubtedly the fair is considered by some farmers a better method of dealing than the auction. Doubtless Colby Fair, seeing that it makes so brave a struggle for existence, would still do well but that the season of the year is all against bringing cattle out to stand in the open for any length of time.

"[Arbory] Colby Fair was ...." *Isle of Man Examiner* 13 December 1902: 6f.

\*

NEWSPAPERS REFERENCES [IN DATE ORDER]

Anon. "[Local Intelligence] Colby Fair ...." *Mona's Herald* 19 December 1835: 5d.

——. "[Castletown and the South] High Bailiff's Court." *Mona's Herald* 31 December 1879: 5b.

——. "[Agriculture, &c] Colby Fair." *Isle of Man Times* 9 December 1893: [5]c.

——. "[Arbory] Colby Fair was ...." *Isle of Man Examiner* 14 December 1901: 5g.

——. "[Arbory] Colby Fair." *Manx Sun* 14 December 1901: [5]d.

——. "[Arbory] Colby Fair was ...." *Isle of Man Examiner* 13 December 1902: 6f.

——. "[Arbory] Colby Fair on ...." *Isle of Man Examiner* 8 December 1900: 5f.

——. "[From the South Side] [Arbory] Colby Fair." *Manx Sun* 8 December 1900: 8b.

