

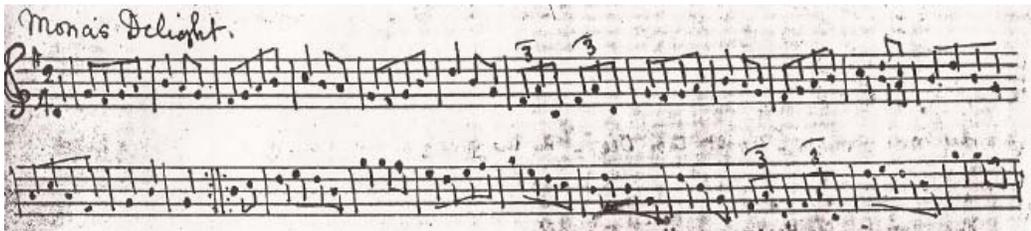
Histories and Mysteries – the secret life of traditional music in the Isle of Man *by David Speers*

The tunes in the three music books that are part of the Clague Collection, held in the Manx Museum Archive, form the bulk of the traditional music recorded in the Isle of Man in the 1890's. They have not been arranged or changed in any way and are the best record of how the music sounded when it was collected.

This is the second in a series of articles that sets out to explore some of the links between the traditional music collected in the Isle of Man and that found in Ireland and Britain, to discover some of the hidden histories behind our traditional music, and to show that the Island has produced beautiful music to match any found elsewhere.

Mona's Delight

(also: Come Friends and Relations, One Fine Sabbath Morn and Eunysagh Vona)



The version of this tune best known today is probably Eunysagh Vona, the tune used for the dance of the same name collected by Mona Douglas in the early 1900's. The version above is from the Clague manuscript and was collected in the 1890's.

The melody of Mona's Delight is mainly in groups of four (quadruplets) but with some groups of three (triplets) taking the place of the quadruplets. This note pattern is a feature of the hornpipe, and this version of the tune is likely to have been used to dance to, probably for hornpipes and perhaps also for step dancing.

Hornpipes were danced in the Island and George Quarrie's poem *The Melliah*, set in *Kirk Bride* in the 1860's, mentions dancing the "Swivvle Hornpipe". Step dancing was popular throughout Britain and Ireland, and several tunes in the Clague manuscript are simply called *Step Dance*. An account by Robert Samuel Sim of Crosby recalls some riotous parties that included step dancing at the former Highlander pub on the evening of the Marown Parish Fair around the 1860's.

In 1981, Professor George Broderick showed a copy of the Clague music books to the late Deasún Breathnach, Irish journalist, poet and writer. In Breathnach's opinion the tune is an "English hornpipe also found in Irish manuscripts".

It seems clear that this version of the tune was a dance tune and, of course, the version we know as Eunysagh Vona is also a dance tune. There are two other versions of the tune in the Clague music books. Both have English language titles, and both were used for religious songs. The first tune, called *Come Friends and Relations*, is written in the mixolydian mode. Its title has been traced to a broadside (songsheet) published in Penryn, Cornwall, in around 1830.

It begins:

Come, friends and relations, let us join heart and hand.
The voice of the Turtle is heard in our land;
Let us all walk together and follow the sound –
We'll march to the place where Redemption is found.

It is about finding redemption through Christ and contains some striking imagery, both features of early 19th century religious revival songs, as they were for the Manx carvals that flourished after the bible was translated into Manx Gaelic.

The second religious song that uses a version of the tune is written in G major. The title, One Fine Sabbath Morn, seems to be of a song in the same vein as the first, though its origins have not yet been traced.

The nature of these songs, and the dateable broadside, places them in the early part of the 19th century. The fact that their tunes were recalled for collectors in the 1890's means they must have been used in the Island until at least the middle of the century.

Also, the two versions of the song tunes were collected from opposite ends of the Island: the first from Charles Clague of Castletown; the second from John Callister of Jurby. Callister was aged 51 when he recalled the tune in the mid-1890's so, for him to have remembered the tune, he would have had to have heard it in the 1850's or (more probably) later. This confirms that (a) the songs were known for quite some time, say, between the 1830's and 1870's; and (b) the tune had been picked up and used in different parts of the Island.

It is clear from this evidence that the tune now best known as Eunysagh Vona was in the Isle of Man both popular and versatile, being used for singing and dancing over such a long period of time. So, where did it come from?

We have seen that Deasún Breathnach recognised the tune as a hornpipe known in England and Ireland, suggesting it could have travelled to the Island as a dance tune.

Whilst visiting a banjo supplier in England a few years ago, I mentioned being from the Isle of Man and he showed me a tune from Playford's The English Dancing Master, published in various editions between 1651 and 1728. This tune was called the Goddesses, appearing as a dance tune above the dance notation. It is a dorian mode version of the Manx tunes (but my banjo supplier had nevertheless made the connection). The dance itself seems to have been very popular as it was included in all the eighteen editions of Playford.

The Goddesses. Longways for as many as will. ♪♪♪♪

Lead up a D. forward and back ♪ That again ♪ Cast off, meet below ♪ Cast off below, meet above ♪

Men go down on the outside of the we. ♪ Back again ♪ This as before ♪

We. as much ♪ This as before ♪

Men go quite round about the we. ♪ This as before ♪

We. as much ♪ This as before ♪

Men take hands and go round ♪ Back again ♪ This as before ♪

We. as much ♪ This as before ♪

Then all hands and go half round back again ♪ This as before ♪

Men the S. Hey ♪ This as before ♪

We. as much ♪ This as before ♪

Then D. Hey ♪ This as before ♪

There are two other links to the Playford dance collections in the Isle of Man. The first is in the tune the Black and the Grey (also another Playford dance). George Waldron mentioned this in 1726 as being used at Manx weddings. In fact, he goes further by saying “no other [tune] is ever used at Manx weddings”.

Unfortunately he doesn't say if the dance was also performed but it is another connection with the Playford material and it would be highly likely that such a widely popular dance manual, published for 77 years, was known in the Island.

The final Playford link is in the tune Haste to the Wedding. This is also in the Playford collections as a dance and dance tune. In the Isle of Man it was collected as Thurot, Manx words, being used for a ballad about the then well-known French privateer and pirate, Francois Thurot, who had some connections with the Island. It isn't known if the Playford dance to this tune was also known in the Island.

Returning to the Goddesses, the dance is a longways set, like Eunysagh Vona, and the first movement of both dances is very similar. Could it be that the dance Eunysagh Vona is a survival, or variation, of the Goddesses?

It is certainly possible that a connection exists. As we have seen, the tune to the Goddesses, a 17th century dance tune in 4/4 time, written in the aolian mode (minor key), survived in the Island in four slightly differing versions:

Mona's Delight; dance tune; 2/4 time; G ionian mode (major key)

Come Friends and Relations; song tune; 4/4 time; mixolydian mode

One Fine Sabbath Morn; song tune; 4/4 time; ionian mode (major key)

Eunysagh Vona; dance tune; 4/4 time; ionian mode (major key)

Whether or not there is a link between the two dances, there is certainly a link between the five tunes (including the Goddesses), showing it to be a versatile and well-used piece of music.

Before we leave Mona's Delight and its variations in the Isle of Man, two further English links should be mentioned. First is the song the Oak and the Ash. It appears in a collection of 16th – 18th century music and songs, The Minstrelsy of England, published in 1901. The tune is basically the same as the Goddesses and a footnote refers to this. But the footnote also mentions that it appears in a 16th century music collection, known as the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, under the title Quodling's Delight (“virginal” refers to a group of early keyboard instruments, including one called the virginal). The following is the first part of Quodling's Delight, from the “Dover Edition”, a reproduction published in 1979:

Quodlings Delight.

7.

GILES FARNABY.

The image shows a musical score for 'Quodlings Delight' by Giles Farnaby. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The bass staff begins with a bass clef and a common time signature (C). The music is written in a style typical of 17th-century lute tablature, with letters (A, B, C, D, E, F, G) placed above and below the notes to indicate fret positions. A repeat sign (two dots) is placed above the treble staff after the first two measures. The second system also has a treble and bass clef staff. The treble staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The bass staff begins with a bass clef and a common time signature (C). The music continues in the same style. A second ending is marked with a '2' above the treble staff.

It can be seen from this that Quodling's Delight has a known composer, Giles Farnaby, born around 1563 in the South of England. He was a cabinet maker and Oxford graduate in music, who made, played, and composed for, virginals.

Quodling's Delight is undoubtedly the source of all the tunes we have been looking at, later being used for dancing in Playford, from where it could have travelled to the Isle of Man. Travelling by this route, however, would have been with the title the Goddesses and the word "delight" seems to be a link between Farnaby's original title and Mona's Delight (Eunysagh Vona appears to be a rough translation made later to "Manxify" the title).

Did the tune become known in the Island even earlier than the Playford dance books?

Next time, we will look at the history and mystery of the Manx tune Daunse, or Car, ny Ferrishyn.

Acknowledgments

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David Speers is the author of Manx Traditional Music for Sessions, which discusses history and revival of Manx traditional music and dance (available from the Manx National Heritage Bookshop, manxheritageshop.com). The various versions of these tunes can be seen and listened to on thesession.org. If you wish to contact the author about anything in these articles please email: manx_trad_music@yahoo.com

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