

Manx Notes 30 (2004)

“THE ODIUM IS CAST ON MY OLD FRIEND MR ED. FARQUHAR”

KARL ROEDER AND THE PERILS OF PUBLICATION (1902)

It appears that my recent note, No. 79, on “Malicious Spirit,” and previous matter, has greatly vexed some of the good people in Cregneash whom I much esteem. I am really sorry to have unwillingly given cause for raising any bad feeling, but I may assure them that I alone am responsible for the publication of these notes, which I have collected during the last six or eight years from a variety of old people in the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, the odium is cast on my old friend Mr Ed. Farquhar, who is absolutely free from any share; the information in question, along with many other items of folklore from that place, was given me at various times from a worthy old man now dead some years. But there really is no personal reflection intended or expressed on any one, and I trust those who feel aggravated will accept my assurance, and desist from venting their ire on Mr Farquhar, who has nothing at all to do with the matter, and who suffers greatly by the general animus against him, which I sincerely hope will cease after the explanation I have given, and that the former good relations will be established.

C. ROEDER.

Source: Charles Roeder, “Manx Notes & Queries: No. 84,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 12 April 1902, 6 cols a–b.



Karl Roeder (1848–1911) was a German national who was resident in Manchester. He made regular summer visits to the Island, the purpose of which was to collect folklore. At some date, he came across Edward Faragher (1831–1908) who lived at Cregneash and who earned his living at that time as a fisherman. He befriended Faragher and the two wrote to each other frequently. Besides this friendship, Faragher became more than a passive informant for Roeder but an active collector for him. Roeder supplied him with blank notebooks for him to fill with whatever he could find, a fresh one often sent with queries arising from the previous one:

I am sending you the books and I wish I would have had a chance to take some more pains with them I should have had a room to myself and not to have been called from them every ten minutes.¹

For example, in a letter to Roeder from 1897 he writes, “I have been to ballakilperic But my old aunts could not tell me about any old tales the old yarns was forgotten by

¹ Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 28 January 1897, Manx National Heritage Library (MNHL), MS 11064, Box 2.

them they are both over Eighty years.”² In one from the previous year, “I am not meeting with any fairy tales as I have not been from home for some time now but christmas is near and folks often go a visiting at christmas times and if all is well I will be trying to have a stroll myself.”³

In order to stimulate interest in collecting Manx folklore, Roeder began a column in the *Isle of Man Examiner*, a newspaper that was sympathetic to the revival of the Manx language in general. As “Manx Notes & Queries,” it started 21 September 1901 and ran until 24 October 1903. By its end, 87 separate columns had appeared containing 261 separately numbered notes. They were fortunately gathered together in book-form as *Manx Notes & Queries*, published the following year.⁴ Roeder contributed nearly all of the columns but that was not his initial intention, his idea was for it to be an open forum but other authors were rare. They can be counted not only proverbially but also literally on the fingers of one hand.

Material for the column was drawn from the letters and notebooks sent on to Roeder by Faragher, but not exclusively, as Roeder had other helpers besides him. And this of course was the answer to the charge over the material that appeared as No. 79 in the series.⁵ Roeder was not being cavalier in reproducing the material; he must have known that the *Examiner* was read in Cregneash. What he maybe did not know was the level of resentment that had been building over the years towards Faragher. The village had long been on the tourist itinerary and Faragher was part of an informal itinerary for some as he often wrote at length to Roeder:

I am kept very busy answering young ladies letters ones that I never saw. There was a scottish man came to our cottage one day last week. whoever told him about me I cannot tell. But he said he was a professor of galic⁶ and wished to know if I had composed anything in manx there was three ladies with him I shewed him some of my poetry and one of the fables in manx and he took a copy of the fable The ladies and himself were surprised at my writings and wondering that one of cregnaish people could do them. he took down my address and he said he would tell all about me to their society. we were talking in galic but I could not understand him as will as he understood me.⁷

² Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 28 January 1897, MNHL, MS 11064, Box 2.

³ Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 21 December 1896, MNHL, MS 11064, Box 2.

⁴ Charles Roeder, *Manx Notes & Queries* (Douglas: S.K. Broadbent, 1904).

⁵ Charles Roeder, “Manx Notes & Queries: No. 79,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 29 March 1902.

⁶ Dr Anja Gunderloch, Department of Celtic, University of Edinburgh, suggests that he may well be Donald MacKinnon who was the Professor of Celtic at Edinburgh, 1882–1914.

⁷ Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 18 September 1896, MNHL, MS 11064, Box 2 (unlisted.) Faragher was engaged in translating *Æsop’s Fables* into Manx, a selection of which later appeared in 1901. Charles Roeder, ed., *Skealyn Æsop*, (Douglas: S.K. Broadbent, 1901). “I saw my name in the ‘Examiner’ and the ‘Manx fables’ to come out in Book form,” Edward Faragher to Charles Roeder, 19 December 1900, MNHL, MS 2146/5 A. While Faragher

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I have but very little spare time for I am kept writing there was a man from Ballasalla came here the other day wanting me to write about the herring fishing and compare the fishing of my early years with the fishings at present. And that has kept me busy for some time. and since then the Vicour is leaving the Parish again. and I have been writing some of my rhymes for him, he is desirous to get them published. So I never did so much writing in one winter in all my life.⁸

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There was a gentleman and lady from london seeing me last week about the manx language he said he had heard my name mentioned in London that he was desirous to see me they came to the field where I was binding corn and waited until we left of but I had not much time to talk to him he said he would call again he could read manx pretty well and he said he could understand every word I read for him. I did not ask his name and he did not tell me but he said his wife was related to Dr Clague and that he had more manks books in his house than any man living.⁹

It is difficult to ascertain Faragher's true feelings over this attention, whether he feels that he is under some sort of obligation or not to comply with these demands. But a note of complaint does enter into at least one letter. In 1901 he was to complain that:

The station Master at Port st Mary was telling me that Sir Walter Wraags was coming to see me. he knows a great many languages. and he has taken a great interst in the manx language. and very perticuler about spelling He is living at Port st Mary but I would rather if he would not come to bother me. I have trouble enough with afflictions if it was some one not so high in the world I would not mind so much but he is high in learning for he is a superanuated judge.¹⁰

The “afflictions” were not to improve; in 1907, he had to leave Cregneash to go and live with his son in England, in a coal-mining village in Derbyshire. “I am not longing for much but a sight of the sea,” he wrote after reaching there.¹¹ He was not to live much longer and died the following year on 5 June 1908. It fell to Roeder to announce his death through the press where he included the following passage:

He suffered many disappointments, and as a fisherman led a very strenuous life; and the unmerited harshness he experienced during the last few years before

evidently read the *Examiner*, the issue in 1902 was that others at Cregneash were also reading it.

⁸ Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 19 January 1897, MNHL, MS 11064, Box 2.

⁹ Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 17 September 1899, MNHL, MS 11064, Box 2. He can be readily identified as G.W. Wood, a noted Manx bibliophile. On his death the Manx Government purchased his collection as the nucleus of the Manx Museum Library.

¹⁰ Notebook, annotated by Roeder 1 April 1901, presumably date of receipt. Formerly, Douglas Borough Library, Roeder MSS, unlisted, now transferred to the Manx National Heritage Library and accessed as part of MS 09447.

¹¹ Edward Faragher to “My Dear Friends,” 25 March 1907, MNHL, MD 687.

leaving Cregneash, from some of the village people, left a deep mark upon his sensitive heart. May he rest in peace and his memory be ever green!¹²

Evidently, this rankled until the end.

These series of encounters, between collector and informant, metropolis and countryside, mark that moment when “a gentleman and lady from london” felt it worth their time to wait for someone such as Edward Faragher to take a break from the work of harvest. This same gentleman was soon to receive from Faragher a copy of his “Arrane mychione Eirnee Sayntoilagh” (“A Song about Covetous Farmers”) which must have been the last thing he was expecting in the post.¹³

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VIENNA, 2004

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¹² Charles Roeder, “The Late Edward Faragher, of Cregneish,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 20 June 1908.

¹³ Cyril I. Paton, “‘Arrane mychione Eirnee Sayntoilagh’: A Song about Covetous Farmers by Edward Faragher (‘Neddy Beg Hom Ruy’) of Cregneish,” *Journal of the Manx Museum* v.71 (1944).

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