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A series of short articles on Manx Gaelic grammar, idiom, vocabulary and pronunciation.

I thought I would concentrate this time on an assortment of various idioms and phrases that crop up in the old texts, especially ones that might be useful in conversation or writing today. For reasons of space I have not given many examples in full, just references. For abbreviations, see end.

Miscellaneous expressions

hoshiaght - firstly

hoshiaght ooilley - first of all (1 Cor. 15:3, 1 Tim. 2:1)

'sy nah ynyyd - secondly, next

'sy trass ynyyd - thirdly

er-jerrey - lastly, finally

er-jerrey ooilley - last of all (Matt. 22:27, 1 Cor. 4:9)

The above phrases are notably used to order arguments and sections in *Coyrle Sodjeh*, *Yn Fer-raauee Creestee*, Bishop Wilson's sermons etc. Note the distinction between *er-jerrey* 'last (in a sequence)' and *fey-yerrey* 'at last, finally, eventually'; they are not interchangeable.

ayns focklyn giarrey - in short, in brief, in summary (FRC p. 6, 34)

ayns beggan focklyn - in short, briefly etc. (FRC p. 43)

gyn arragh y ghra - in short (lit. without saying anymore) (SyC p. 52)

gyn eie er - besides, not to mention (Judges 20:15)

gow lesh! - go on! (in speaking), say on! (Gen. 24:33, 1 Sam. 15:16)

tar royd! - come on! (Matt. 14:29, Gen. 19:32)

fuirree ort! fark ort!¹ - wait! hang on! hold on! (Job 18:2, Ruth 3:18)

ass dty aash - adv. quietly, softly (PSD p. 20, Gen. 33:14); also interj. hush! quiet!
(Kelly grammar p. 74)

cha n'aggle dou - tush! no fear! (Ps. 10:6, 94:7; MBM p. 168)

¹ see *Bun as Bree 3*

marish shen - besides / apart from that, moreover (1 Kings 10:13, 1 Chron. 22:15)
er shen - with that (as 'with that he left'), afterwards, then, so (Ex. 34:32, John 6:13)

Note the difference between English 'with that' and Manx *marish shen*. Since there are a number of words in Manx corresponding to English 'with' (*marish, lesh, rish*), *marish* has a more specific and unambiguous meaning of accompaniment in Manx, so 'along with that' > 'besides that, apart from that'. Cf. the ambiguity of English 'fight with' and the clarity of Manx *caggey marish v. caggey rish*. The English 'with that', which basically means 'after that, then', is *er shen* in Manx. *Lesh shen* does not seem to have any special idiomatic meaning.

s'feer shen, s'feer eh - true, that's true, it's true (Dan. 3:24, SW p. 8)
dy jarroo firrinagh - (Rom. 3:31, SW p. 231)
dy firrinagh-focklagh - truly (John 8:34, SW p. 229)
shen myr t'eh - that's how it is, it is so (2 Sam. 2:23, Job 5:27)
cha nee shen myr t'eh - no, not so, that's not how it is (1 Sam. 1:15, 1 Kings 3:22)
lioar - yes, indeed (e.g. *lioar ta* - indeed yes) (Mal. 2:2, Is. 40:24)

son shoh as ooilley - nevertheless (2 Sam. 24:4, 1 Cor. 14:21)
ayns ayren ennagh - in some measure, to some extent (FRC p. 32)
cha vel feme rish - there's no need for it (Gen. 33:15)
myr vees feme rish - as needed (1 Sam. 10:7)

son mac-soyley - in comparison, as a comparison, for instance (SW p. 7, 119)
ayns (co-)soylagh(ey) rish - in comparison with (Haggai 2:3, SW p. 203)

ta my haie fys aym - I know full well (lit. I have my fill of knowledge) (SW p. 12, 36)

kys dhyt? (1 Cor. 7:16, 2 Sam. 1:5) / **kevys dhyt?** (Creg.) - How do you know?
cha s'aym - I don't know (*cha s'aym* - Luke 22:60, *cha s'ayd* - John 3:8, *cha s'ain* - Gen. 43:22, *cha s'eu* - Mark 10:2) (really *cha 's aym* = *cha [vel fy]s aym*)
quoi ec ta fys? - who knows? (Ecclesiastes 6:12, Esther 4:14)
ec Jee ta fys - God knows (2 Cor. 11:11, SW p. 66)
er fys da - known to (Ex. 21:36) (*T'eh er fys dou* - It is known to me, I'm aware of it)
gyn-yss da - unbeknown to, without the knowledge of, hidden from (Num. 15:24)

choud's s'bio mee - as long as I live (1 Cor. 8:13, SW p. 76)
choud's vee'm bio - as long as I live (1 Sam. 28:2, SW p. 147)

Yiow kied - 'You'll get lave'

From the *Vocabulary of the Anglo-Manx dialect*, under 'lave':

LAVE, 'leave'. The expression 'You'll get lave' is in very common use in the Isle of Man and seems to be peculiar to it. It is a literal translation of the Manx 'Yiow kied' (thou wilt get leave), and has many shades of meaning according to the way in which it is applied. It is very often equivalent to the English expression 'Say what you will'.

T. E. Brown says: 'At the beginning of an argument it is very cheerful.-"Oh ! you'll get lave !" That means, "I will give you leave to say what you like!" But as you go on arguing perhaps you are not holding your own, and you say in a somewhat gloomy tone, "Aw, well; you'll get lave; get lave enough; you'll get lave plenty." Sir James Gell said that a Manxman always made use of it when he was beaten in an argument but would not give in. In such a case it meant, 'I don't agree with you'.

All I gorr urrov him was, 'You'll get lave'. Well thas the way it is, and thou'll get lave. The lek is in, and you'll get lave, i. e. there are such, say what you will. You may talk till your lil-tongue is out, and you'll get lave.

*I'm goin, and you'll get lave. I've gorrit here, aw, you'll get lave (B.).
The oul' Manx ones say, 'Aw, yiw kied, yiw kied, it's their own way they'll have'.*

I imagine that *yiow kied* (properly *yiow oo kied* cf. *t'ou < *ta oo*) could be a very useful expression today, for 'have it your own way', 'say what you like', or certain uses of the ubiquitous contemporary colloquial English expression of apathy 'whatever'. A very useful phrase if you are having an argument and want to give in without admitting you are wrong.

I would be grateful if anyone could shed light on *you'll get lave*. The *Vocabulary* suggests that the phrase was 'in very common use'; does anyone still use it? Does anyone remember older people using it?

Cha jig lhiat jannoo shen!

The usual meaning of *cheet lesh* is 'succeed, manage to do something; prosper', as in the following examples:

*As va ben va roie foalley er ve eck rish daa vlein jeig, v'er vaarail ooilley e cooid-seihlt er fir-lhee, as **cha daink eh lesh** veg jeu ee y lheihs - And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any [and none of them succeeded in healing her] (Luke 8:43)*

*As va'n Chiarn mârish, as cre-erbee ghow eh ayns laue **haink eh lesh** - And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth [and in whatever he undertook he succeeded / prospered] (2 Kings 18:7)*

But in the negative it can also have another meaning, of being unable to something in the sense of it being improper or outrageous, or not allowed:

*eisht jir eshyn, Bee dty host; son **cha jig lhiem** gimraa er ennym y Chiarn - Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not mazke mention of the name of the Lord (Amos 6:10)*

*As dooyrt Moses, **Cha jig lhiem** dy yannoo myr shen - And Moses said, It is not meet so to do (Exodus 8:26)*

*Agh **cha jig lhiem** dy choyrnt daue mraane jeh ny inneenyn ainy: son va cloan Israel er chiangley ad-hene fo mollaght, gra, Cursit vees eshyn ver ben da Benjamin - Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin (Judges 21:18)*

*son yn order ta scruiit ayns ennym y ree, as sealit lesh fainey yn ree, **cha jig lesh** dooinney erbee goll n'oi - for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse (Esther 8:8)*

If we were to say *Cha jig lhiat jannoo shen!* it would mean ‘You can’t do that!’, but with a tone of disapproval or outrage; we know that whatever it is *can* physically be done, but are expressing that it is forbidden, unthinkable or undesirable.

‘To Meet’

There are various expressions for ‘meet’ in Manx.

çheet quail - meet, come to meet

goll quail - meet, go to meet

Although *quail* is mostly associated with the verbs *çheet* and *goll*, it is a preposition meaning ‘towards, to meet’ which can be used with any verb:

Hug cummaltee cheer Teman lhieu ushtey huggeysyn va paagh, **roie** ad lesh nyn arran **ny whail-syn** ren chea - The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled [they ran with their bread to meet him who fled] (Isaiah 21:14)

Dy bee mayd cooidjagh **troggit seose**, / **Quail Yeesey** ayns ny bodjallyn! - that we will be lifted up together, to meet Jesus in the clouds! (my translation - 1799 hymn 24).

Quail includes an elided preposition *i* ‘in’ (=ayns) and so conjugates like *lurg*, *noi*, *mastey* etc. The statement in *First Lessons* 164 that it ‘lacks a simple preposition’² is simply false, and contradicted by no fewer than thirty instances of *quail* + noun in the Bible. (The same goes for *my yei*, *dy yei* etc., which allegedly has ‘no simple prepositional form’ according to *First Lessons* 160 — in fact the simple form *jeiy* [=jei] occurs in SW p. 73)

Hie mee quail yn dooinney, haink eh my whail, hie shin dty whail, haink ad ny whail, roie mee ny quail, ren oo siyr nyn quail, etc.

There is also *meeiteil rish* and *cur meeiteil da*:

Veeit Philip rish Nathanael - Philip findeth [met] Nathanael (John 1:45)

ver y cooilleenyder-folley yn dunver dy baase, tra t’eh **meeiteil rish** - the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him (Num. 35:21)

As **hug y Chiarn meeiteil da** Balaam - And the Lord met Balaam (Num. 23:16)

As hie ree Ahaz gys Damascus dy **choyrt meeiteil da** Tiglath-pileser ree Assyria - And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglathpileser king of Assyria (2 Kings 16:10)

² By ‘simple preposition’ *First Lessons* here (§164) means the form without a pronoun, such as *cour* as opposed to *my chour* etc; it is asserted that the simple, i.e. non-pronominal forms *jei* and *quail* do not exist, which is false. In §154 the term ‘simple prepositions’ is used to mean those prepositions consisting of a single part such as *ec*, *er*, *fo* etc. and which form their pronouns with endings *-m*, *-t/-d* etc. rather than using possessives like *my yei*, *dy whail* etc.

Meeiteil is also frequently found without *rish*:

Myr dooinney ta chea veih lion, as **meeiteil** muc-awin - As if a man did flee [flees] from a lion, and a bear met him [and meets a bear] (Amos 5:19)

Then there is *cur qualtyys / quaaltagh da*:

Ta myghin as firrinyys er **choyrt qualtyys d'y cheilley** - Mercy and truth are met together (Ps. 85:10)

Ver-ym quaaltagh daue myr y vuc-awin ta er choayl e quallianyn - I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps (Hos. 13:8)

Lhig da muc-awin t'er choayl e quallianyn **ve quaaltagh** dooinney, roish ommydan ayns farg - Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly. (Prov. 17:12)

In the latter example, and possibly the one before as well, the Manx translator seems to be playing on the specific cultural sense of *qualtagh* as the 'first foot', the first person or creature one meets going out and who might bring bad luck. The translator presents this verse as 'It's better to have a bear that's lost her cubs as your *quaaltagh* / 'first foot' than a fool in his anger', keeping the basic sense of the Hebrew proverb but adding a Manx cultural (and superstitious) resonance.

A. W. Moore in *Folklore of the Isle of Man* gives us the following information on this custom:

The "first foot," called the *qualtagh* in Manx, is defined as follows by Kelly in his Dictionary: "the first person or creature one meets going from home. This person is of great consequence to the superstitious, particularly to women the first time they go out after lying-in." The *qualtagh* (he or she) may also be the first person who enters a house on New Year's morning.

The words *quail* (preposition) and *quaiyl* (noun meaning 'court (of law)'), and their derivatives *qua(a)ltys* and *qua(a)ltagh*, all have the same origin in the Irish word *cómhdháil* which Dinneen gives as 'meeting, convention, presence, interview; act of accompanying; opposition', as in *Cómhdháil Ceilteach* 'Celtic Congress'. This in turn is a combination of the prefix *cómh-* (Mx. *co-*) with *dáil*, which is now used for the name of the lower house of the Irish parliament.

There is also *çheet raad* 'meet, encounter, come across', where *raad* works the same way as *quail* (*my raad, dty raad, ny raad, nyn raad*).

As cha leah's daag eh eh, **haink lion ny raad**, as varr eh eh - And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him (1 Kings 20:36)

Shen-y-fa ren eh resooney ayns y synagogue rish ny Hewnyn, as rish ny deiney crauee, as ayns thie ny quaallagh gagh laa roosyn va **cheet ny raad** - Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market [court-house] daily with them that met with him (Acts 17:17)

Note that the most natural order in modern English might be the opposite of the Manx; you might say in Manx *haink shenn charrey my raad jea*, lit. ‘an old friend came in my way yesterday’, where in English it would be ‘I met / came across an old friend yesterday’.

‘Leave me alone’:

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|--|---|--|
| <p>Lhig lhiam! (Job 7:16) Lhig fea dou! (Job 10:20, 7:19) Faag void mee! (Mark 1:24, John 12:7) Ny cur eie orrym! (Acts 5:38)</p> | } | <p>Leave me alone! Let me be!</p> |
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Lhiggey lesh is a phrasal verb meaning ‘leave alone’ but also ‘spare (someone’s life)’ (as in Jer. 45:5 *bee dty vioys lhiggit lhiat*), for which it has the synonyms *sparail* (from English, e.g. Gen. 18:26 *nee’m yn slane ynnyd y sparail er y graih ocsyn* ‘I will spare all the place for their sakes’) and *shaghney* (e.g. *Eshyn nagh ren e Vac hene y haghney* ‘He that spared not his own Son’), though there is an ambiguity with *shaghney* as it can also (and more often) mean ‘avoid’ and ‘escape’.

In *faagail void* the preposition *veih* agrees with the subject, as with *cur lhiat*, *troggal ort* etc. We will look at these verbs more closely in a future issue.

Cur eie er means ‘disturb, interfere with, meddle with/in’.

Proverb of the month:

Ta moddey bio ny share na lion marroo. - A living dog is better than a dead lion.

Abbreviations:

FRC - Yn Fer-raauee Creestee (The Christian Monitor), 1763

MBM - Manx Ballads and Music, A W Moore, 1896

PSD - Plain and Short Directions and Prayers, Thomas Wilson, 1707 (appended to *Coyrle Sodjeh*)

SW - Sharmaneyn liorish Thomase Wilson (translations of some of Thomas Wilson’s sermons), 1783

SyC - Shibber y Chiarn (A Short and Plain Instruction For The Better Understanding Of The Lord’s Supper), Thomas Wilson, 1777