

MANX LATIN: A FURTHER DISTINCTIVE OF THE ISLAND?¹

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ABSTRACT

Over the past two generations, scholars of Manx have worked patiently to rehabilitate scholarly appreciation of traditional Manx as a fully valid Gaelic language; it was not merely an aberrant version of the tongues known from Ireland and Scotland, nor had it lost its integrity through anglicization. The question is now whether the Island's extant latinity deserves an analogous reappraisal. Since the Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources (DMLCS) programme adopted into its corpus the Manx synodal statutes of the 13th/14th centuries, the choice of wording found therein has repeatedly turned out to be different from that selected for parallel ecclesiastical legislation elsewhere, even when the intended meaning was similar. This shows up in the semantics of specific items of vocabulary but also, most strikingly, in these texts' readiness to use rare Latin words, including ones apparently unique to Mann. The paper applies DMLCS methods of systematic word-searching and analysis to Cheney's definitive 1984 edition in an attempt to determine just what philological position the Statutes occupy within the spectrum of Celtic and wider medieval latinity. A parallel is then drawn with the later establishment of Manx vernacular literacy and its subsequent remarkable tenacity; a contrast is adduced with the very different fate of traditional Cornish, and an underlying reason for the difference is proposed.

Keywords: Statutes of Sodor, Latin vocabulary, the *gilbogus*, Manx vernacular literacy, traditional Cornish.

¹ This contribution combines revised versions of papers delivered at the Sixteenth International Congress of Celtic Studies (Bangor, 2019) and at the Fifth Poznań Conference of Celtic Studies (2024). I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for various observations, additional references, and suggestions (particularly those noted explicitly below).

1. Introduction

Over the past two generations, scholars of Manx including Thomson, Broderick and Lewin have worked patiently to rehabilitate academic appreciation of traditional Manx as a fully valid Gaelic language.² The position is being increasingly vindicated that traditional Manx was not merely an aberrant version of the tongues known from Ireland and Scotland, nor had it lost its integrity through anglicization (as was most notoriously and scornfully suggested by O’Rahilly).³ The question for the present paper is whether the Island’s extant latinity deserves an analogous reappraisal.

1.1 The statutes of the synods of Sodor

To put it colloquially, who knew that Manx Latin might even be a thing? Some years ago, one of the Royal Irish Academy’s research programmes, the Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources (DMLCS), captured for its digitally searchable corpus those statutes from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that pertain to synods held by the diocese of Sodor, this being the bishopric that is coterminous with the Isle of Man.⁴ With respect to the history of the medieval Church in the Island, in C.R. Cheney’s words these statutes “easily outweigh all other evidence for its laws

² See for example Thomson (1969), Broderick (1984–1986), and Lewin (2017).

³ “Some of the Manx that has been printed is merely English disguised in a Manx vocabulary. Manx hardly deserved to live. When a language surrenders itself to foreign idiom, and when all its speakers become bilingual, the penalty is death”: thus O’Rahilly (1932) at 121.

⁴ The Statutes constitute text no. H1318 in Harvey and Malthouse (2010). On the extent of the diocese, a reviewer of the present contribution is right to note that until 1387 the Hebrides were formally included, and we have, for example, the observation by Woolf (2015) at 341 that bishop Simon “administered the see of Argyll between c.1230 and c. 1238” in addition to his Manx responsibilities. However, such extra-territorial involvements had probably become increasingly *ad hoc* and temporary; the Manx location of the bishop’s seat itself had long been established by the time of the texts discussed here and, as regards the Statutes specifically, Cheney (1984) at 63 is quite definite that there is no “evidence that clergy from outside Man participated in the making of these statutes, nor that they were published or observed outside the island”. This limitation seems borne out by the earliest (1230) Statute’s opening self-description as being *Sodorensis diocesis in insula de Mann* (“of the diocese of Sodor in the Isle of Man”); by that of the latest (1351) as being by *Sodorensis episcopus una cum toto clero Mannie* (the “bishop of Sodor together with all the clergy of Mann”); and by a reference in the middle one (1292) to a custom *ecclesie Scoticanorum et nostre* (“of the Scots’ Church and our own”): see Cheney (1984) at 76, 86, and 83 respectively (I am indebted to my colleague Dr Joseph Flahive for drawing my attention to the last of these). For all purposes relevant to the present discussion the two territorial designations seem, at least in practice, to have become interchangeable, and to refer exclusively to the Isle of Man.

and customs and institutions”.⁵ All in Latin, they constitute the proceedings of church conferences convened in the Island in roughly the years 1230, 1292, and 1351, in each case by the bishop of the diocese. Though the extant records only reach us from three centuries later, they do so in triplicate, in manuscripts now in Oxford, Cambridge, and still on the Island; and each of these is complete.⁶ So one can be fairly sure of the text, which was excellently published by Cheney in 1984, his being the edition captured for the DMLCS database. However, together the Statutes constitute only 229 sentences out of the 187,000 that make up the whole electronic archive of Celtic latinity (that is, only just over a single thousandth part of the total); so it was hardly to be expected that they would yield many examples of particular interest for the lexicon currently in compilation.⁷ After all, as with all other texts written in Latin anywhere and at any time, the vast majority of the words employed in the Statutes were always going to be just that — part of standard, international Latin, as inherited from Classical times. This great *lingua franca* served literate western Europe peerlessly for nearly two thousand years; its basic vocabulary remained essentially the same throughout that period, and would have been immediately comprehensible to readers from Poland to Portugal and from Scotland to Slovenia.⁸ Manx Latin was never going to be a separate language from that Latin, any more than are any of the other Celtic Latin texts treated by DMLCS. Instead, any philological interest in these works would derive from any points in which they diverged from what might be expected — that is why the phase of the DMLCS dictionary being concentrated on at the moment is designed to codify, precisely, what proves to be non-Classical about Celtic latinity.⁹ It was here that there was no reason to believe the Manx statutes would prove particularly rewarding.

2. The lexically innovative nature of the Statutes

It was therefore surprising when, on average, some word of interest for the purposes in question turned out to occur in at least every seventh sentence within these short

⁵ Cheney (1984) at 66. The Statutes’ only potential rivals in this regard are the roughly contemporary *Cronica regum Mannie & Insularum* (“Chronicles of the kings of Man and the Isles”), as preserved uniquely in British Library MS Cotton Julius A.vii and edited in Broderick (2004), for kindly supplying a copy of which I am grateful to their editor. But as regards philological issues, which are what concern us here, Broderick has confirmed that the language of the *Cronica* “is largely mainstream for its time” (pers. comm.).

⁶ See Cheney (1984) at 66–67 and 72–73.

⁷ This is the DMLCS programme’s specifically *Non-Classical lexicon of Celtic latinity*, now nearing completion, of which the elements published to date are Harvey and Power (2005), and Harvey and Malthouse (2015).

⁸ For a survey of the international efforts that are in progress to codify lexicographically the Latin language of the Middle Ages across Europe see Harvey and Durkin (2018) at 4–6.

⁹ See n. 7 above.

texts; the average for the whole corpus is not much more than one such occurrence in every twenty-one sentences and, within the legal-cum-penitential genre to which the Statutes belong, only one in every twenty-three. This actually made the Statutes more lexically innovative than, say, Adomnán of Iona, who is well known for his verbal inventiveness but whose corresponding citation-rate is just one in eleven sentences.¹⁰ What was more intriguing still was that the wording found in the Manx material repeatedly turned out to be different from that of parallel ecclesiastical legislation elsewhere, even when the intended meaning was similar.¹¹ This showed up in the semantics of specific items of vocabulary but also, most strikingly, in these texts' readiness to use rare Latin words, including ones apparently unique to Mann. In an attempt to determine the philological position occupied by the Statutes within the spectrum of Celtic and wider medieval latinity, this paper will apply DMLCS methods of systematic word-searching and analysis to the relevant vocabulary, classifying it into the various categories that are used in dealing with material from the Celtic-Latin corpus more generally.

2.1 Mainstream Late Latin vocabulary in the Statutes

Of the Statutes' lexically non-standard words, then, the first and, as it were, least deviant category is vocabulary that, though non-Classical, is nevertheless attested widely across western Christendom from before the year 600. Not surprisingly, given both the typically Catholic origins of such material and the genre of the Manx texts in which we are examining it, the ecclesiastical flavour of these so-called Late Latin items is overwhelming: they include, for example, the ubiquitous Greek-derived word **laicus**,¹² which has an intriguingly complex profile in Hiberno-Latin but whose five examples in our 1292 text simply refer to Christian laypeople, as opposed to the clergy.¹³ Unsurprisingly the international word for the mass, **missa**, occurs thirteen times in the Statutes, and there is a whole section prescribing how it should be celebrated.¹⁴ Then we have a reference in 1292 to certain *matrices*

¹⁰ For detail of Adomnán's coinings see Harvey (2014).

¹¹ In the words of Cheney (1984) at 69, "even when expressing commonplaces of ecclesiastical law, the Manx bishops used their own words and did not borrow" — an assertion for which Cheney provided no substantiation, however, and which the present paper therefore examines and attempts to evaluate.

¹² Throughout this contribution the important distinction is maintained between lexemes (that is, distinct semantic items that would consequently appear as discrete headwords in a dictionary and that are here represented in **bold**) on the one hand and, on the other hand, particular instances or occurrences of any such lexeme — or references to what it represents — which are here rendered in *italics*.

¹³ The Statutes' five examples of **laicus** may be found in Cheney (1984) at 82, 84 and 85.

¹⁴ The Statutes' thirteen examples of **missa** may be found in Cheney (1984) at 80, 83, 84, 85, 86 and 87; the section *De missis celebrandis* is at 85.

ecclesiae (like that, in the plural, meaning “mother churches”, with the interesting apparent implication that, even within the Isle of Man with its mere seventeen parishes, there was a plurality of superior churches as well as a layer of subservient foundations).¹⁵ An abiding concern of bishop Russell in 1351 was *reparatio*, namely the development, restoration, renovation, maintenance, or upkeep of buildings (in this case, of church chancels and naves).¹⁶ To pay for everything a preoccupation of the Statutes, particularly in 1292 but already in 1230, had been the question of the *decimatio* (meaning a tithe or assessment thereto);¹⁷ specific objects of tithing included mills, for which the plural term is **molendina** or **molendini** (but we cannot tell which, as it only appears in our text in the ablative, *molendinis*)¹⁸ while, at the level of the individual, even the humble *laborator* (“manual worker or labourer”) was not exempt.¹⁹ The method of payment might be flexible but, as for the amount, we find no fewer than six times between 1230 and 1292 a phrase that appears to have been a specifically Manx coining, namely *ad ualorem* plus genitive, meaning “to the value of”, in precise monetary terms.²⁰ And for infringements of the Statutes’ provisions, whether in regard to tithing or behaviour, there were of course prescribed disciplinary measures, procedures, and sanctions. Ecclesiastical sanctions could include excommunication, not least for falsely setting someone up for punishments from the secular power such as *mutilatio*, recorded in 1292 for the deliberate cutting off of body parts.²¹ In matters of record, particularly of legal undertakings made orally, it was of course important that the respected laymen called as witnesses should be what the Statute concerned calls **fidedignus** (“trustworthy in regard to testimony”).²²

2.2 Non-mainstream vocabulary antedated elsewhere within Celtic latinity

Moving further into the realm of Classically unknown words in the Manx statutes we come next to those whose coinings postdate also the pan-European, so-called

¹⁵ Assuming that the *matrices ecclesiae*, as mentioned in Cheney (1984) at 85, are actually to be identified with the parish churches, the subservient foundations may in at least many cases have been still-functioning *keeills* (the numerous small chapels that had dotted the earlier Christian Manx landscape with a seeming density of about one per *treen*/townland). The only apparent alternative explanation would be if the wording represented a hangover from a time when the diocese had possessed functional jurisdiction over Hebridean territory (which might have had a different structure of ecclesiastical organization) in addition to the Isle of Man; see n. 4 above.

¹⁶ The section *De reparatione cancelli et nauis ecclesie* is in Cheney (1984) at 87.

¹⁷ The Statutes’ five examples of **decimatio** may be found in Cheney (1984) at 77, 78, 81.

¹⁸ The Statutes’ two examples of *molendinis* may both be found in Cheney (1984) at 81.

¹⁹ The Statutes’ single reference to such *laboratores* may be found in Cheney (1984) at 82.

²⁰ The phrase *ad ualorem* occurs five times in Cheney (1984) at 76 and once at 82.

²¹ The 1292 Statute refers to *membraorum mutilatio* in Cheney (1984) at 83.

²² The 1292 Statute refers to *uiris adhibitis bonis et fidedignis* in Cheney (1984) at 84.

Late Latin terms that we have just been looking at. Though thus later than Late Latin, a first batch of these are, nevertheless, found within Celtic Latin texts that are earlier than our Statutes. Again this vocabulary is mostly Church-dominated; thus we find a ban by bishop Russell in 1351 on priests from other dioceses presuming *residentiam facere* (“to take up or be in residence”) for the purpose of exercising ministry without first getting his permission.²³ Though this is a normal restriction as between dioceses, it does enable us to see that the work-permit is nothing new in the Isle of Man (or *Mannia*, as the two later Statutes know it)!²⁴ Subject to the disciplinary sections of the 1292 Statute we find the perennial figures of the *capellanus concubinarius*, the cleric living with a concubine, and the *concubinaria*, the lady herself.²⁵ Out-and-out criminals were themselves infamous (that is, literally, *notorius*, as that Statute has it) and liable to excommunication, as were those who shielded them from justice or succoured them, the verb for the latter malfeasance being **manutenere**.²⁶ Lesser offences might be subject to monetary fines, the currency (at least by 1351) including the *marca*.²⁷ Then we have terms whose use in Mann in 1292, at least, is technical and ecclesiastical, such as the Greek-derived one designating a bishop’s glove or gauntlet, which our text calls a **cerotheca**.²⁸ An underlying concern with apparel had emerged already in 1230 with a reference to various forms of headgear, amongst which is a layman’s cap or *capellus*. The context is again one of payment — the cap must in certain circumstances be donated to the Church — and again what is important is its value (the cap must be the one the man would wear at Christmas,²⁹ presumably meaning his best one rather than the jolly festive garb that the specification would indicate in the Isle of Man today!)

2.3 Non-mainstream vocabulary antedated elsewhere but only outside Celtic latinity

Before we reach words and usages that at least appear to be actually unique to the Latin of the Isle of Man there is one further, slightly less exotic category: that is items which, though post-Classical and post pan-European Late Latin, and though

²³ This ban is recorded in Cheney (1984) at 88.

²⁴ The Statutes’ references to *Mannia* occur in Cheney (1984) at 78 and 86.

²⁵ These personages are dealt with in the sections *De castitate sacerdotum* (“The chastity of priests”) and its inevitable corollary *De pena transgressorum* (“The punishment of transgressors”), both in Cheney (1984) at 79.

²⁶ The description of the criminals and the word **manutenere** are found in a single sentence in Cheney (1984) at 82.

²⁷ A *pena dimidie marce* (“fine of half a mark”) is prescribed in Cheney (1984) at 86.

²⁸ The context in Cheney (1984) at 79 is that clergy in general are being forbidden to wear apparel, including such gloves, that does not befit their station.

²⁹ This is the *capellum ... sicuti ipse homo in die Natalis Domini ambulauerit* specified in Cheney (1984) at 76.

not found within Celtic latinity earlier than the Statutes, nevertheless are attested at least somewhere in Latin before their occurrence in our texts. These include the technical ecclesiastical words **campanarius** (“a bellringer”), appearing in our Statutes in 1292 but before that in various twelfth-century continental sources,³⁰ and possibly <**chrismatorium**> (“a chrismatory” — though bishop Russell’s usage seems in any case exceptional, probably referring to a place reserved for the anointing ceremony within a church).³¹ Inevitably there are further words to do with payments to the Church of one form or another; thus six times in 1230 we have **decimalis** (an adjective meaning payable in tithe or “that constitutes a tithe”).³² Another word connected with tithing, in that it specifies a form in which the payment may be made, is the plural **lacticinia**, meaning dairy produce, or food items made with milk. This is an interesting one because its Manx occurrences, in 1230,³³ seem to be antedated by more than a couple of years solely by a similar form in the famous Latin and Greek glossary once attributed to Philoxenus, of which only one complete copy now survives, in a ninth-century manuscript preserved in Paris.³⁴ Given how widespread we know this glossary once was, it seems quite probable that our word was drawn from it, possibly even directly, which would imply the existence in the Isle of Man of a now lost manuscript witness to it.

In 1292 clothes crop up again, this time in the shape of the mantle or cloak designated by the feminine noun **mantella** — which the Manx clergy were absolutely forbidden to wear, having to use instead the mere *capa clausa*, or closed cape.³⁵ Provisions of the Statutes were not to be got round *aliqua liter* (“in any way”, 1230); procedures were expected to be followed *conformiter* (“duly” or “appropriately”, 1292); and time-periods for the carrying out of obligations might be specified with words such as the noun **quindena**, the 1292 Statute’s word for a fortnight (literally “fifteen days”, as in many languages).³⁶ Faced with all this, people might be tempted *querelari*, to complain or grumble — except that in the Isle of Man that Late Latin word meant, at least in the late thirteenth century, to be legally charged or accused of something.³⁷ Mother Church appears to have been a rather controlling parent at times!

³⁰ For examples see Prinz *et al.* (1999) s.v. **1. campanarius**.

³¹ The word occurs in the ablative case, and spelled *crismatorio*, in Cheney (1984) at 87.

³² All of the 1230 Statute’s examples of **decimalis** may be found in Cheney (1984) at 77.

³³ Both of the 1230 Statute’s examples of **lacticinia** may be found in Cheney (1984) at 77.

³⁴ See Lindsay (1917).

³⁵ The Statute’s ban on the *mantella* may be found in Cheney (1984) at 78 (note that neuter forms of the word had been current from Classical times onward).

³⁶ A requirement that women should be churched, accompanied by a stipulation that this should not be done *infra quindenam* (“within a fortnight”) of the birth, occurs in Cheney (1984) at 79–80.

³⁷ The 1292 Statute may be found using the verb **querelari** in this sense in Cheney (1984) at 82.

2.4 Coinages apparently original to the Statutes

Next we come to usages that are, apparently, original to Manx Latin. It is not that their meanings are particularly striking; indeed, being a further part of the terminology used for the synodal statutes, they mostly fit into the semantic categories we have been encountering throughout. Instead, as so often in lexicographical research (this being what separates philologists from historians), the primary interest lies not in what the texts say, but in how they say it. That is not to imply that the lexical innovations are devoid of interest, however, even to historians:³⁸ given that there is always some motivation for the coining or repurposing of vocabulary, the study of it can reasonably be expected to cast light on the felt needs of the society that produced it. The most obvious motivation is the need to refer to something for which the person responsible is unaware of any existing terminology in the language concerned, or when relevant words that do exist are insufficiently precise. The items we have looked at so far may be felt already to have given an accurate flavour of the context and prevailing mindset in which the Statutes were drawn up; now that we are about to move on to words that, as far as we can tell, the compilers adapted or even coined for themselves, we may expect to see in sharper definition some of the precise distinctions they felt it necessary for their purposes to make.

First, a couple of professional terms appear in the Statutes with precise meanings that appear interestingly novel. One is **fractor**, which is known from Late Latin with the obvious meaning “one who breaks” but which, in the Isle of Man and governing a genitive, is simply the word for a burglar, with the genitive indicating the building broken into.³⁹ There was a Classical Latin word as precise as this, namely **effractorius**; but it had only been recorded once from Antiquity, namely by Seneca, and had remained very rare ever since. It looks as if the compilers of our Statute of 1292 were either unaware of it, or did not find it amenable to their use; either way, it is clear that more obvious Latin terms such as **fur**, a common thief, were just not sufficiently specific.⁴⁰ Another noun of agency that we find recycled in the same document and, in this case, repurposed is **falcator**. It was still a recent coining, possibly originating with Geoffrey of Monmouth in the first half of the twelfth century and in any case always hitherto meaning a mower or reaper; but our text uses it to designate, instead, a maker of scythes or blades.⁴¹

³⁸ See Harvey (2021).

³⁹ Cheney (1984) at 82 gives us the 1292 Statute’s inclusion of *ecclesiarum fractores* (“breakers into churches”) in its list of those who were to be excommunicated.

⁴⁰ On Classical Latin **effractorius** and **fur** see Glare (1968–1982) s.vv.

⁴¹ On **falcator** in both its senses see Harvey and Malthouse (2015) s.v. For the sense in which the word is used in the 1292 Statute, as found in Cheney (1984) at 82, Classical Latin used **falcarius**, on which see Glare (1968–1982) s.v.

Not surprisingly, the context is a requirement that such artisans should pay a tithe on their profits!

A drive for precision is clearly what also lies behind the final group of words to be examined here. They are probably the most interesting group because, in order to achieve that precision, they have needed to be coined from scratch, as far as we can tell by our compilers. A primary commodity was grain, and in the Isle of Man, as elsewhere, it was of course subject to tithe, which was paid in kind. But what were the logistics of getting it from the farmer to the rector: whose barn was it stored in until needed? This matter is the subject of a clause which, though inserted later, has taken its place in the 1230 statute and which uses two innovative words seemingly not found anywhere else at any time: namely the ablative plural diminutive *arconiolis* to designate individual heaps of corn, and the corresponding verb for piling or stacking corn in these heaps, namely **arconizare**, coined with an ending that is ultimately Greek.⁴² A semantically related noun with a straightforwardly Latin etymology, but likewise seemingly coined in the Isle of Man, was **liga**, from Classical **ligare**. Etymologically we may compare Classical **ligamen**, but that means a band, tie, or general ligature; by contrast, the Manx coining refers specifically to the straw from a sheaf used to tie it.⁴³ This will probably prove to have been one of the most precise definitions of any word in the whole DMLCS lexicon.

2.5 The sole loanword from Gaelic in the Statutes

Our final precise coinage is probably the most interesting for a number of reasons. Not the least of these is that not only is it the sole loanword from Gaelic to appear in the Manx statutes, it is one of the very few borrowings to have been made anywhere or at any time, from any branch of Gaelic or indeed of Celtic more widely, into any of the Latin texts in the DMLCS corpus. (That finding, by the way, is in turn one of the most surprising results of several decades of work on the Celtic-Latin dictionary: unlike native speakers of other languages across Europe, Celtic writers of Latin were most reluctant to intrude their own vernaculars into the language in which they were composing. They would have resort to Greek or even Hebrew, but far more commonly and interestingly would build new words from within the resources of Latin itself — as indeed we have seen in the present paper — before they would borrow a word from their own mother tongue. But that reluctance has

⁴² The inspiration for both of these coinings would appear to have been the basic noun **arc(h)onium**, itself coined and used by Petrus Comestor (“Peter the Eater”) in his popular *Historia scholastica*, written around 1173 at the abbey of St Victor in Paris and most recently edited in Sylwan (2004).

⁴³ The 1230 Statute’s use of the term **liga** may be found in Cheney (1984) at 77; on Classical **ligamen** see Glare (1968–1982) s.v.

already been discussed at length in print,⁴⁴ and now is not the time to address it again.) The Gaelic-derived word in question now is **gilbogus** (or **gylbogus**); it occurs three times in a single paragraph in the earliest of our statutes, that of 1230.⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, given that the compilers seem to have found no purely Latin word adequate to the task, the motivation for the coining appears to have been the need for extreme, legal precision; and even then, helpfully enough for us, they have felt obliged to give a detailed definition. The context is the question of who is liable to *mortuarium* (a death-duty payable to the parish church), and the answer is that even a *gilbogus* is so liable, that individual being *quis si unius tantum noctis etatis extiterit et ad habendum bona ordinatus, aut in bonis possessus, existat*; that is, someone who, even if he has only lived for a single night, has nevertheless been the legal owner of goods or would have become so by entitlement. That helps with the etymology, in which the *gil-* part is fairly clearly the Gaelic word that went on to appear in modern Manx as **guilley**, “a boy”. The late, great R.L. Thomson pointed out that if we emend the second element to *-beg-* rather than *-bog-* then we have an attested phrase for a male child, *guilley beg*; but that no such change is probably required because *guilley bog*, literally a soft boy, would itself appear appropriate as it stands, having reference as it does to a child of tender age.⁴⁶ The point is that there was no lower age-limit to paying your church dues!

2.6 Review of the lexical make-up of the Statutes

In review, few of the words discussed above may strike one as particularly weird or outstanding, either individually or collectively. Instead, the body of non-Classical Latin words in the Manx statutes resembles nothing so much as a

⁴⁴ See for example Harvey (2011) and Harvey (2018). The contrast between Celtic-speakers’ aversion to importing their native vocabulary into the Latin they were writing and, for example, English-speakers’ cheerful readiness to do so — giving forms like **flotare** “to float”, **daiwercata** “day-work” (that is, the measure of land that can be worked in one day), and even **werkmannus** “labourer, worker, workman” (Latham, Howlett and Ashdowne (1975–2013), s.vv.) — may be at least partially explained by differences in the genres of composition being engaged in and the classes of writers involved.

⁴⁵ The occurrences of the word may be found in Cheney (1984) at 76.

⁴⁶ Thomson’s comments were made in a letter quoted in Cheney (1984) at 70. A reviewer of the present contribution has helpfully pointed to a somewhat over-ingenious alternative derivation of the whole word from a putative Norse compound, proposed in a response to Thomson by Sayers (1985) and politely but firmly — and convincingly — rejected with characteristic modesty in a counter-response by Thomson (1988). As for the transferred use of the Gaelic adjective **bog** in reference to youth, another reviewer notes that clear attestations exist outside of Manx, citing *eDIL* s.v. **1. boc** and the *leanbh bog óg* (“child of tender years”) indicated by Ó Dónaill (1977) s.v. **bog**². The latter, at least, seeming tautologous (seeing that **óg** “young” is explicitly included in the phrase along with **bog**), a closer analogue to our putative Manx formation would appear to be the *mac bog* (also rendered “a child of tender years”) of Dinneen (1927) s.v. **bog**.

microcosm of the corpus of non-Classical items found in Celtic latinity as a whole — breaking down, as it does and as we have seen, into the categories of: mainstream Late Latin vocabulary; non-mainstream vocabulary antedated elsewhere within Celtic latinity; non-mainstream vocabulary that is antedated but only outside Celtic latinity; coinages apparently original to the particular texts being looked at, including a quantum of exotic forms and a quantum formed from within Latin but in refreshingly imaginative ways; and, at the end, the outlier in the form of the isolated loan from the local Celtic vernacular. But that is the entire point: the Manx statutes constitute only a tiny fraction of the whole Celtic Latin database, and are of a single genre; so the fact that they nevertheless resemble the whole corpus in miniature, managing still to display all of those categories, is precisely what is remarkable about them. What is more, they are both internally consistent and, as it were, notably self-sufficient in lexical terms; unlike some of their counterparts elsewhere they were not, for example, subject to the arbitrary or merely fashionable borrowing of contemporary French words.⁴⁷ Instead, Manx latinity was, if one dares to say it, capable of standing on its own three feet; as displayed in these documents, which were written confidently and specifically by the Manx Church and for the Manx Church over a sustained period of time, this Latin does indeed therefore constitute a further distinctive of the Island.

3. Conclusion: Proposing a parallel with the development of Manx vernacular literacy

We may usefully close by standing back from all the detail and contemplating instead a striking aspect of the phenomenon that we have discerned — namely that of a trio of bishops presiding over an exercise in ecclesiastical writing that formed part of an international continuum but that, sustained over a period of well over a century, amounted to a discernible written tradition distinctive of the Isle of Man. It seems remarkable that, four hundred years later, the same Island witnessed another three bishops (this time Phillips, Wilson and Hildesley) famously presiding over another exercise in ecclesiastical writing (this time the translating of the Prayer Book and the Bible) in an effort sustained over a similar period of time, with an output that again formed part of an international continuum (this time that of literacy in Gaelic) while again having the presumably unintended effect of setting specifically Manx usage strikingly apart (this time in the form of the distinctive spelling system that was devised for it, which has endured).⁴⁸ There is no need to claim any more here than coincidence, albeit quite

⁴⁷ The exemption from a tendency to borrow at random in this way is shared by writers of Latin in and from other Celtic territories: see Flahive (2023) at 135.

⁴⁸ On all of this see Lewin (2020).

a detailed and multilayered one, in order to perceive that an interesting characteristic is common to the two enterprises. We know that, between the years 1604 and 1765, the talent necessary for the magnificent task of reducing the Manx vernacular to writing, and then translating into it the Bible and the Prayer Book, turned out to be a skillset available among the ordinary clergy of the seventeen parishes in the Isle of Man.⁴⁹ We have no reason to believe that outside help was needed between 1230 and 1351 either, when the distinctive and autonomous Latin tradition of the synods of Sodor was established.⁵⁰ Does this not show what remarkable scholarly achievements even a small network of committed and literate individuals can be capable of?

3.1 Proposing a Cornish comparison

Such networks do, however, need direction, leadership and sustained support from someone in authority, and this is my final point. We can contrast the Manx experience (or experiences) with that of another small and isolated Celtic-speaking community, namely that of west Cornwall.⁵¹ Notoriously, the traditional Cornish language was never provided with Bible or Prayer Book, and ultimately became extinct. The initial cause of this sad fate is usually thought to have been the dissolution of Glasney collegiate church in 1548; and there is no doubt that, until then, Glasney had provided an institutional base for what had been a productive vernacular literary tradition. However, on the one hand Glasney's counterpart in the Isle of Man, namely Rushen Abbey, had been similarly suppressed, in 1540; and, on the other hand, only a generation earlier than the first of the Manx-language Prayer Books, a network of committed parish clergy similar in size to the "Manx Seventeen" was still actively writing the Cornish vernacular for pastoral purposes some time after Glasney had gone. I would suggest, therefore, that the key difference lay instead in the fact that Cornish never had one, let alone two, trios of dedicated bishops, nor even a single bishop, who wished to work through the linguistic medium it provided because, unlike the Isle of Man, Cornwall was not an episcopal see in its own right; it was ruled ecclesiastically from far-away Exeter. This was remedied in 1876, with the formation of the diocese of Truro; but by then it was too late. You really needed your own bishop!

⁴⁹ Lewin (2020) at 40–41.

⁵⁰ See the remark of Cheney (1984) at 63, quoted in n. 4 above.

⁵¹ This contrast has been explored from the Cornish side in Harvey (2023) at 66–67.

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