



Oral History

Kathleen Faragher Project

Interviewee: Clare Christian
Interviewed & recorded by: James Franklin
Date recorded: 05 August 2015
Topic: The Manx dialect poet, Kathleen Faragher; watching Kathleen Faragher and Constance Radcliffe perform at W.I. events; Maughold Girl Guide and Brownies; Christ Church Dhoon carol services; featuring in Kathleen Faragher's poem, *The Carol Singers*.

This is transcription of the interview has been lightly edited for ease of reading.

CC: My name is Clare Christian, *nee* Clare Kerruish of Ballafayle, Maughold. My father was Charles Kerruish, and my mother Margaret Kerruish, Margaret Gell. My mother was very much involved with the beginnings of W.I. in the Island, and was one of the Island's organisers, as they called it, and was much involved with Maughold W.I., and it was through Maughold W.I., I think, that she first met Kathleen Faragher, who, living at Glen Mona was a member of the Maughold W.I. I suppose I just met Kathleen when I was quite a small child, and then growing up perhaps as a young teenager. Possibly, if she came to the house for committee meetings, or I would be at W.I. concerts, or it might have been church concerts, I'm not sure. But certainly she featured in some of the photographs which are still around from those times.

JF: So you actually heard her up on the stage reciting her things?

CC: Yes, yes. I think she did a couple of pieces. I've a notion she did a duologue, but I can't remember who would be with her, and something on her own as well. But she was one

of the participants, it might have been Constance Radcliffe who was the other person, because Constance liked to do dialect poems and things as well. So I suspect that it might have been those two, certainly Kathleen and it was on the Maughold church hall stage. There used to be concerts in the halls then. That was the sort of parish entertainment. We'd have concerts with spoon playing and poetry and singing and all the rest of it. I don't recall them all that often, but, you know, just a kind of special event. At that time you knew that Kathleen wrote her own poems and so on, but not very much, she was just part of the community as such. I didn't know much more about her than that. I suppose I didn't even know at that stage that she'd published all these poems. Maybe that came a little later on, or an awareness of it.

JF: What was she like?

CC: Well she was a small lady, and they all wore hats in those days, that's the thing I can remember as a young person; all these ladies in the W.I. if they'd go on their outings or whatever, would wear hats. I think she was quite kindly and would have been approachable, but I had no real reason to; I don't think I ever discussed or talked to her about anything, not that I can remember. But she was just, she was there and she and a few, well now, I'm trying to think of the other ladies' names. There was Miss Wilkinson, and some older ladies who were on the W.I. committee. But the number of times I suppose I'd come into contact with her would be limited.

JF: And did you ever feature in any of her poems?

CC: Only the one about the guides. I wonder if I've got it? She wrote about us having a carol service in the Church. 'Carols by Candlelight'. It's not a dialect one, but it's about the Guides and Brownies wending their way into the church. Jean Thornton Duesbury took the Guides along with, well the Brownies as well, Kathleen Callister's mother was a Brown Owl, and so those two ladies, and Mrs Stobow were the Brown Owl and tawny owl that I remember. And Jean Thornton Duesbury took us in the Guides when we got a bit older, but every Christmas we would do carols by candlelight in the Dhoon, and this poem is Kathleen's record of that. As I say it's not dialect, but it refers to the Dhoon and it being by candlelight, and my memories of it were that the wax used to drip everywhere. They still have a service there, but it's all much more sterile now, in the sense that the candles are well protected in little lamp containers.

JF: You don't want to read it, do you?

CC: Well I will if you like.

JF: Oh, I'd love you to.

CC: Yes, ok.

Carols by Candlelight.

No light inside the little church
Save that on crib and laden tree,
Where shadows hover warm and dark
With air of deep expectancy.
Then through the ancient oaken door
The Guides and Brownies wend their way
On quiet feet; and from each hand
A candle sheds its softened ray.
How reverently they take their place
Within God's house, and as they sing,
Their sweet young voices tell again
The story of the Babe – the King.
They bring before our eyes the Star,
The Shepherds resting in the field
Above the hills of Bethlehem,
Where God's great purpose was revealed.
They sing the message from their hearts,
Their youthful faces all aglow
With earnestness and joy and love.
God grant wherever they may go,
That faith will guide them through the years,
Unfaltering, steadfast, shining bright
As when they sang and knelt and prayed
In Dhoon's small church by candlelight.

So I think she rather had a different impression of us; we probably really were quite mischievous at times, I imagine, and nervous as well, if you had to sing a bit of a solo or something. But, I'm not sure we were as reverent as she thinks we were [laughter]. But it was always very special at Christmas to have the carols up there. And it's rather nice that she felt it worth recording it in one of her poems. And then we would go into the church hall afterwards for a cup of tea or whatever, so we probably saw here there as well.

JF: It must be quite nice to see, because it's not often that people express themselves like this about oneself.

CC: No. Wishing us faith and support through life, so yes, it is rather nice. Yes, wishing us well, wasn't it, 'God grant that wherever they may go, their faith will guide them through the years'. Yes, it was her wish for us, her prayer for us, I suppose.

JF: And just to make sure, your mother didn't speak about her, or, there was no second hand stories?

CC: Not really, no, not really, no. I don't think so, because my mother didn't live to that old, so I didn't have great opportunities discussing her with my mother even. I suppose I left here to go to university just before I was 18, and so from then on there wasn't all that much, except in the holidays - I don't know when Kathleen died, but

JF: 1974.

CC: '74, well, yes, so from '63 onwards I wasn't in the Island a great deal, being away at university and then working in England. So, my mother died in the early 70s, so I wouldn't have been home to discuss it with her. So really I'm afraid there's not a great deal I can tell you about Kathleen from a personal perspective.

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