

JOHN MATT MYLCHREEST (1841-1934)



Johnny Mylchress

Epithet: d.1930s, Miner

Record type: Photographs

Biography: Lost an arm in a mine accident

Gender: Male

The photograph and information above is from the iMuseum. His name is usually given as John Mylchreest. He had been a lead miner, but in fact lost his arm in an accident when working on the Snaefell Mountain Railway on 10th August 1896.

The Snaefell Mountain Railway was constructed between January and August 1895, with a service from 20th August 1895. However, maintenance and improvement work was still necessary on the line. The following August the Isle of Man Times for Tuesday 11th August 1896 reports

Accident at Snaefell.*

A serious accident occurred on the Snaefell Mountain Tramway yesterday afternoon. A man named John Mylchreest was working in a hole laying a drain in the six-foot way between the two sets of rails on which the trams run on the side of the mountain just a little above "The Hut." He was standing in the hole, with his head and shoulders above ground, and was facing towards the top of the hill. He saw a car descending, and leaned back as it passed him, resting his right arm on the inner rail of the "up" line as he did so. But, unfortunately, while he had seen the "down" car, he had not observed that another car was coming up on the other rail just at the same time, and was passing almost simultaneously with the "down" car. The consequence was that his right arm was crushed by the wheel, and the footboard of the "up" car caught the poor man by the side of the head and severely bruised him. The whole thing happened so suddenly, and the man put his arm on the rail when the car was so close that it was impossible to stop; but everything was at once done that could be done to alleviate his sufferings. Dr. Miller was brought from Laxey, and he attended to him, and afterwards Mylchreest was removed to Noble's Hospital, where Dr. Holmes took every care of him. The man has, of course, lost his arm, but otherwise is doing as well as could be expected.

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Mona Douglas refers to John Matt Mylchreest as a source. In 1975, introducing “Songs in Manx Gaelic” as part of Peter Kennedy's *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, she writes :

John Matthew Mylchreest, known throughout Lonan parish as John Matt, was an old shepherd-crofter, a friend of mine from early childhood. He lived with his sister, Christian, in the Thalloo Hogg, a small croft, and had sheep on most of the Hills round about, his own fields being on the edge of the mountains. He had only one arm, having lost the other in an accident while working on the construction of the Snaefell mountain railway, but he was very active and capable, and after his sister died he lived alone and looked after himself until well on in his eighties. He was a great story-teller, and also knew quite a few songs and dances. He knew all the places mentioned in Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey and would tell how the song was ‘made on’ Nicholas Colcheragh, or Raby as he was called, ‘before the Murreys [the Dukes of Atholl] came to Mann’, by a young lad living in Raby who was a wonderful singer and fiddler, and how after the great storm and the loss of his flocks Raby himself died, so the tale went. John himself had worked for most his life all around Raby, and had lived for a time at the Laggan Agneash, a croft at the foot of Snaefell.

Mona Douglas has here overlooked the convention of patronymics. John Mylchreest was known as John Matt because he was John, the son of Matt. Rather than Matthew, his father was generally known as Matthias Mylchreest (c.1805-1861).



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In memory of / MATTHIAS MYLCHREEST / of / (Clybane) / died October 13th 1861 / aged 56 years / CHRISTIAN / wife of above died March 25th 1875 / aged 56 years / CHRISTIAN / only daughter of above / died June 26th 1913 / aged 57 years / THOMAS / son of the above / died Feb. 3rd 1931 / in his 83rd year.

Matthias Mylchreest farmed Clybane in Lonan, and in 1840 married Christian Fargher. They had seven sons – Matthias, William, John, Thomas, Robert, Caesar and James - and one daughter - Christian. John was a twin of Thomas, both christened on 25 March 1851.

Clybane went on to be farmed by Matthias Mylchreest the younger. The 1881 census shows him as head of the household, with unmarried siblings John a Lead Miner, Christian as House Keeper and James a Joiner.

In the 1891 census, John is still shown as a Lead Miner, but living with Christian as House Keeper at Thollow Hogg, a thatched cottage a little to the north-east of Clybane. The move from Clybane may have been because of the marriage of his brother Matthias, and possibly the sale of Clybane. Matthias is later recorded at 70 years of age in the 1911 census as a retired farmer living at a property called Clybane House in Laxey.

Following John's accident in 1896, the 1901 census shows him as Living on his Own Means at Thalloo Hogg, with Christian (no occupation shown). The 1901 census refers to language and shows John and Christian as speaking Both (Manx and English – all others on the same page are shown as monoglot English speakers).

The 1911 census also refers to language and again shows John and Christian as speaking Both. It refers to John as Farmer and to Christian as Housekeeper. Christian died in 1913.

At the time of John Matt's death, he was living in Glen Road in Laxey, and was found dead there on 19 March 1934. He is described as being 86 years of age. His twin brother Thomas had died 03 February 1931, when he was described as being 'in his 83rd year', suggesting the twins were born about 1848, although they were not christened until 25 March 1851.

The following photograph is again from the iMuseum.



John Matt Mylchreest's House, Clybane, Lonan – unknown photographer, 1961
Formerly thatched



I.H.S. / In memory of / my dear husband / MATHIAS MYLCHREEST / of Clybane House,
Laxey / who died Aug. 29th 1918 / aged 78 years / At Rest / JOHN, brother of the above /
who died March 19th 1934 / aged 86 years.