



London Manx Society

(Yn Cheshaght Manninagh Lunnin)

PATRONS: H.E. THE LT. GOVERNOR OF THE ISLE OF MAN
THE PRESIDENT OF TYNWALD
THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF KEYS.

President - Alastair Kneale

NEWSLETTER Autumn2015
Editor - Douglas Barr-Hamilton

Dates for your diary

2015 Mhelliagh

Monday 12th October at 12.00 noon
St Bride's Church, Fleet Street followed by refreshments
at the Hack and Hop,
35 Whitefriars Street, EC4Y 8BH

NEXT NEWSLETTER DUE IN THREE MONTHS PLEASE SEND NEWS TO:

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The Sun Shines on The Righteous

Or the Devil looks after his own! Well either saying applied on Sunday 5th July at the Tynwald Day Cooish held at Bryan and Sheila Corrin's lovely home in Beckenham. The day had started dull, damp and dreary and right up till the last minute it didn't look as though we would be able to sit out in the garden but the weather changed at exactly the right time and it was glorious.

There were three generations of Corrins present and they made the small contingent of LMS members very, very welcome. There mightn't have been many of us there but there was no shortage of skeet to catch up on and exchange, Douglas brought a message from Sam updating us on his state of health; our thoughts and best wishes are with him, Mary and their family.

It was my partner Peter's first time at an LMS function and he was tickled pink with his reception, which might have been helped by his contribution of a home-made coffee and walnut gateau which went down very well with everyone and disappeared in record time. The food was from mixed sources with people bringing various dishes so it was a good spread of various salads, poached salmon, quiches, sandwiches, cold meats and not forgetting the Moore's Kippers.

All in all it was a very good do definitely helped by the sudden change in the weather.

Stewart Christian



Mhelliah

We are delighted to be able to return to St Bride's Church in Fleet Street for our Mhelliah and that Canon Robert Teare is able to be with us this year. As usual Margaret Brady will play the wonderful organ for us and Maisie Sell tells me she is already practicing her Lord's Prayer in Manx.

We have decided to try a different pub for our refreshments and have booked a private upstairs room with food provided. The venue is the Hack and Hop, 7, Whitefriars Street, EC4Y 8BH.

Keep Monday 12th October free. Service at 12 noon. Refreshments immediately afterwards: cost £20 per head.

Full details in the notice accompanying this newsletter.

Island Quiz

(open to non-members through the web site)

- Where else would you find a three legs emblem?
(a) Pitcairn, (b) Sardinia, (c) Sicily, (d) Tahiti.
- How was Illiam Dhune executed at Hango Hill?
(a) beheaded, (b) burned, (c) hanged, (d) shot.
- In which ship did George Shuttleworth travel to the TT in 1935?
(a) Ben my Chree, (b) Lady of Mann (c) Mona's Queen, (d) Victoria.
- Where is the Island's Aviation and Military Museum?
(a) Andreas, (b) Ballsalla, (c) Douglas, (d) Jurby.
- When were the Island Games last held in the Isle of Man?
(a) 2001, (b) 2003, (c) 2005, (d) 2007.

The first reader to send me five correct answers will receive £20 in fuel when renting a car from Mylchreest Motors at Ronaldsway Airport.

Answers to June's quiz:

- Walk of Parishes is 85 miles.
- Castle Rushen was built around 1252.
- Memorial of Seven Years War victory is in Bishopscourt Glen.
- Manx actor playing Orson Welles is Peter Shimmin.
- Senior TT was reduced from seven to four in 1954.

Sam Weller was first with an all correct set of answers to our last quiz and receives £20.

Acknowledgements

The Editor thanks Mavis Bell, Valerie Caine, Stewart Christian, Maisie Sell, Sam Weller, Sue Woolley, for their kind contribution and also Culture Vannin and Manx Radio. News about you and articles (of around 450 words) about Island life are welcome and of interest to all. If in doubt, please contact me, Contributions can be sent at any time for inclusion in the next newsletter, if possible by email (barrhamilton@btinternet.com) or 132 Bush Hill, N21 2BS.

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Closing date for the next issue, 24th November.

She spoke with descendants of the heroic crew of 'The Wanderer' and also relates how one of the American survivors made a bequest to Skipper William Ball of funds to finance the building of his own fishing boat, which he named 'Aigh Vie' ('good luck' in Manx Gaelic).

Vivid depictions of key-players in the drama, ranging from American high society tycoon Alfred Vanderbilt, to the ships' master, the gruff, gritty Scouser, Captain William 'Bowler Bill' Turner, bring the narrative alive, making it a fascinating read that will engage the general reader as well as maritime historians and conspiracy theorists.

'Lusitania – Tragedy or War Crime?' is published in paperback by Peter Owen and is priced £14.99.

Book review by **Sue Woolley** (first published in Manx Tails)

Ramsey remembered

Three months almost to the day after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, a Manx steamship was lost. By then she was known as HMS *Ramsey* and she was operating out of Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands.

The ship had been launched in Barrow in 1895 as a ferry called *Duke of Lancaster* to operate between Fleetwood and Belfast for the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company. The Steam Packet Company acquired the vessel in 1912 and renamed her "*The Ramsey*." Operating between Liverpool and Douglas, she was one of three vessels taken over by the Admiralty soon after the start of World War I and renamed. Another eight of the fifteen company vessels were quickly similarly requisitioned. After conversion to a warship with the installation of guns, the ship was used to patrol at night supported by two destroyers. Initially enjoying much success in very dangerous conditions, she intercepted a ship flying a Russian flag and ordered her to stop. It immediately hauled down her flag, hoisted a German one and opened fire at very close range. The Ramsey's bridge was destroyed and the skipper killed. Then a torpedo struck and the ship went down just five minutes after the encounter. They had met the German minelayer, SMS *Meteor* and lost 55 of the 98 man crew. The only consolation in the story is that next day the navy overwhelmed the *Meteor* and scuttled her after rescuing the prisoners.

On the Island on Saturday 8th August, one hundred years after the tragedy almost to the minute, the lost were commemorated at Ramsey's war memorial in the Courthouse gardens. In the moving ceremony, two minutes silence were held and wreaths laid.

DBH

Sources: Life and Times of the Steam-packet, EU wreck-site, IOMtoday.

Northern Croakers

I heard on the grapevine that Mavis Bell had joined a choir singing in Manx although she has not yet learned the language since her return to live in Peel. She tells me that she enjoys it thoroughly and will give it a mention in the article she intends to write for us on life on going back to the Island. Northern Croakers is the translation of the choir's Gaelic name, Cliogaree Twoaie. Its internet site tells me it was formed in 1984 by some members of Bock Yuan Fannee (a dance group) who decided it would be fun to sing and perform in the language. Their repertoire includes modern songs and traditional music especially carvals (Christmas carols).

About twenty-five strong, the choir performs widely on the Island and has also appeared at festivals in Ireland and in Cornwall.

It has produced two recordings: Droch Vraane (and a few good men) in 2004 and Nollick Ghennal (we should all have learned what that means!) in 2006.

DBH

Tynwald Day

Our President, Alastair Kneale, again represented the Society with a stand at Tynwald Fair and kindly gave up his day to promote us. There was an unusual event this year, however, as Valerie Caine reports . . .

Vikings of Mann Set Up Camp for Tynwald Day

As part of the celebrations for Tynwald Day the Vikings of Mann set up camp in the nearby Cooil y Ree (Nook of the King) in the village of St John's, giving members of the public the opportunity to learn more about the daily lives of the Vikings and experience what life was like for the Norse invaders.

Nestling amongst the trees in a variety of tents, members of the local group took on the roles of warriors, craft workers and home makers, but were on hand to discuss aspects of their daily lives, whether it be questions about weapons, clothes, or the food which they ate. The encampment was open over a two day period, to allow the public a more relaxed opportunity to absorb what the Vikings of Mann had on offer, which included living history displays, story-telling and a revealing insight into habits of combat.

Although the history books may dwell on the darker side of Viking history, their skills and expertise were also evident in their craftwork, which became an important aspect of their day-to-day survival and for trading purposes.

Suitably attired in Viking dress for the occasion, members of the group were on hand to answer a variety of questions from the public, with children encouraged to learn more about the period which gave the Island a variety of place names, a new chapter in Manx history and its own government.

Valerie Caine © July 2015

Medical Bulletin

Sam Weller is now making good progress. He tells us that everything has healed up now and the surgeon is ready to carry out what will hopefully be one last operation. It has been scheduled for 16th September. Best wishes Sam.

DBH

Doctor

Who do you think you are?

I have previously mentioned finding Manx people or their descendants in unexpected places . . .

Recently, as my GP practice was to close, I registered at a surgery just a few yards from my home. As a new patient I was given an appointment for a health check. Imagine my delight to see the name Christian on the card. However, Dr. C was out on a home visit when I went but, after my enquiries, I was told that Dr Christian, who comes from Southport, has indeed a Manx connection: a direct descendant of William Christian (Illiam Dhone, brown-haired William)! I hope to meet her sometime

Maisie Sell

Josephine Kermode (Cushag)

I knew very little of her work when I published her poem *Traa dy liooar* in our last edition - and nothing about the lady herself so I embarked on a little study. I found out that she was a member of the Ramsey Kermodes. Born in 1852, she was one of the seven talented children who lived beyond childhood of Rev. William Kermode, chaplain of St Paul's, Ramsey before becoming Vicar of Maughold and then Rector of Bal-laugh. Like her brother, P M C Kermode who was the first curator of the Manx Museum having made his name publishing a work on Manx Crosses, she never married, acting as his house-keeper after he moved to Douglas. She and her sisters were educated at home by a governess; her brothers went to King William's. While in Ramsey, she worked as an unofficial district Nurse, her father being prominent in promoting medical efforts during a cholera outbreak in the town.

With most of her siblings, she moved with her father as he changed parish and they eventually "retired" to the family home at Cloughbane in 1890 and it was only in 1899 that her first published work appeared, *A Lonan Legend* and she adopted her pen name. In August 1907, a collection *Poems by Cushag* was published, mostly in dialect. A year later she moved to Douglas with PMC. Further collections of poems appeared in 1911 and 1913, Later they lived in Glen Auldyn and after his death in 1932 she moved to live with her sister in Wimbourne where she died in 1937.

Lusitania: Tragedy or War Crime?

Respected author Jennifer Kewley Draskau, whose study of Manx folk hero Illiam Dhone was published to considerable acclaim in 2013, has turned her attention to one of the most moving and dramatic episodes of the First World War in her new book, 'Lusitania: Tragedy or War Crime?'

RMS *Lusitania*, pride of the Cunard fleet, was torpedoed and sunk off the southern coast of Ireland in May 1915 by a German U-boat, with the loss of 1,198 lives. When the ship left New York for Liverpool on what would be her final voyage, submarine warfare was intensifying in the Atlantic. Germany had declared the seas around the United Kingdom a war zone and the German embassy in the United States had placed a newspaper advertisement warning people of the dangers of sailing on the *Lusitania*. On the afternoon of 7 May, *Lusitania* was torpedoed 11 miles off the Old Head of Kinsale, inside the declared war zone. A second internal explosion sent her to the bottom in 18 minutes.

The event had a special resonance for the people of the Isle of Man because the first vessel on the scene was the Peel fishing boat, The Wanderer, whose crew rescued 160 men, women and children.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* had repercussions on both sides of the Atlantic and was ultimately to change the direction of the war. Even now, 100 years on, many questions have never been fully resolved.

In this, the centenary year, 'Lusitania: Tragedy or War Crime?' is a timely re-examination.

With the confidence of an astute historian, Dr Kewley Draskau looks at the story from all angles, describing the political machinations in motion before and after the event, the lives and backgrounds of passengers and crew who made that fateful journey, and the far-reaching repercussions.

She asks why the German U-Boat captain was initially hailed a hero in his own country before being court-martialled after an international outcry? Why the ship's captain, an experienced and respected seafarer, was made a scapegoat? Was the ship carrying arms, making it a legitimate target? And perhaps most intriguingly of all, how much did First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill know?

Snaefell Mountain Railway Anniversary

Despite the unfavourable weather conditions which plagued the one hundred and twentieth anniversary celebrations of the Snaefell Mountain Railway, many people made a pilgrimage to the summit for this special occasion.

Proceedings got under way at Laxey Tram Station with a performance by members of the National Methodist Youth Brass Band, who were on an extensive tour of the Island. But as passengers were waiting to board the tram for Snaefell, there was one unusual figure who moved quietly amongst them who captured their attention. This was the infamous Alexander Bruce, in full costume, who was instrumental in establishing the Manx Electric Railway from Douglas to Ramsey and also familiar for his part in a syndicate known as The Snaefell Mountain Railway Association.

He is, however, more readily recognised as the General Manager of Dumbell's Bank and implicated in the financial institution's collapse in 1900. Although charged and placed under formal arrest, Alexander Bruce was by this time gravely ill, prompting the High Bailiff to rule that the suit against the Scotsman would rest. He died barely six months after the bank's demise and is buried in Braddan Cemetery, a short distance from George William Dumbell who created the bank which bore his name. Scheduled trams continued to run up and down the mountain in weather conditions which mimicked those experienced at the opening ceremony one hundred and twenty years ago.

But an additional tram carried a number of dedicated enthusiasts on a specially extended journey along the Snaefell Mountain Railway line, accompanied by local historian and author Andrew Scarffe, who gave a running commentary. There were also a number of photographic opportunities along the way.

Due to the impenetrable weather conditions, other celebrations were forced indoors, which included Snaefell Mountain Railway collectable memorabilia from Isle of Man Stamps and Coins and displays of how to make a Manx 'bumbee cage' with John 'Dog' Callister. A small exhibition within the Summit Cafe and Restaurant comprised a private collection of postcards connected with Snaefell and its environs, together with personal recollections of the area. A number of Michael Starkey's paintings were also on show.

Later, the inaugural presentation of a specially commissioned forty minute work for a chamber ensemble, composed by Tim Price of Ramsey, was performed inside the Summit Cafe and Restaurant, as well as simultaneously relayed over loudspeakers across the surrounding countryside and live on Manx Radio.

Valerie Caine © August 2015

Her poems remained popular after her death but it seems that few people recall that she also wrote several plays although they have been described as some of the most remarkable in all of Manx literature." They were published in *Peel Plays* and *Glen Auldyn Plays* and their originality stems from her fluency in Manx Gaelic which helped her in her acquisition of folklore alongside Sophia Morrison, editor of the Manx Language Society's newsletter until she died in early 1917.

The Ramsey Courier added more information in a fulsome obituary that summed up popular feeling with the words, "To Manx people her poems are not merely literary creations of high standing but are treasurers of the heart."

So we finish with another of her poems and it has to be the one from which she took her name:

Now, the Cushag we know,
Must never grow,
Where the farmer's work is done.
But along the rills,
In the heart of the hills,
The Cushag may shine like the sun.
Where the golden flowers
Have fairy powers
To gladden our hearts with their grace.
And in Vannin Veg Veen,
In the valleys green,
The Cushags have still a place.

DBH

Maryland Bound

The 2016 convention of the North American Manx Association is to be held in the Maryland port of Annapolis in June.
(NAMA Newsletter)

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

This is the title of the play being staged from 17-19th September at the Ballakermeen High School theatre by the new drama company, Manx Theatrical Productions. Its unusual format includes audience participation so theatre-goers are asked to be in their seats at least twenty minutes before the 7.30 start time.

It sounds well worth a visit if you are on the Island on these dates; tickets cost £12.50 each and can be obtained at the Sea Terminal, Villa Marina or by phone on 01624 600555.

Peel Carnival Defies Unfavourable Weather Conditions for a Fun Day Out!

Despite unfavourable weather conditions, Peel Carnival went ahead with a day of activities including staged entertainment around the promenade and quayside, a variety of stalls and the highlight of the day the carnival parade.

It was a great community event which appealed to all members of the family, and attracted visitors to watch a cross-section of performers, a myriad of walking tableaux, floats and a small selection of classic vehicles.

Over £1,000 of cash prizes were on offer for those with a creative flair who put their heads together to make imaginative floats and decorative costumes, which were judged at the House of Manannan, prior to the Grand Parade.

Street entertainment included the popular Team Power Stilts guys who made their debut last year, and the talented members of the Panfire Steel Band from Manchester; a small band with a big sound!

Valerie Caine

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Peel Hosts a Successful Yn Chruinnaght Inter-Celtic Festival

The annual Inter-Celtic festival, Yn Chruinnaght, brought colour and vibrancy to Peel during five days of music, song and dance, as visiting groups and artistes joined with local performers to provide entertainment at various venues throughout the town.

It was a great location for a varied programme, which was largely focused around the hub of the fishing port, kicking off with a concert in St German's Cathedral before heading down to a popular gig at The Creek.

Peel Methodist Church has also become a favourite acoustic setting for afternoon concerts, which this year featured a selection of singers and musicians, including a number of rising stars from the ranks of the Island's younger performers.

Out at Peel Golf Club, the award-winning Mischa Macpherson hosted a Scottish singing workshop, which was followed later by a rousing ceili, with music provided by visiting Breton and Cornish groups and the inimitable Calor Gas Ceili Band in their final performance, after thirty six years on the Manx circuit.

Meanwhile a discussion about Celtic languages took place at the Methodist Guild Room, a Cornish dance workshop at the Centenary Centre and the Corrin Hall provided a venue for a popular craft fair, which included a range of artistic talent and a varied use of local items.

And for those wishing to try something a little different, specialist carver Sharon Littley was on hand during two workshops over the weekend to help talented individ-

uals carve their own Welsh lovespoons.

Music sessions, one of the mainstays of the festival, took place at The Royal and at The Highwayman.

But probably the most successful events were at the Centenary Centre, with two sell-out concerts featuring the phenomenal folk band Flook with support from Greg Joughin and local duo Strengyn, followed by the magnificent premiere of The Gathering, written by David Kilgallon and commissioned by Yn Chruinnaght; with a powerful finale by Breton duo Landat-Moisson.

Other events involving Island musicians and dancers were held at The Institute in Laxey and at the Villa Marina in Douglas.

The festival concluded with an energetic display of Manx dancing by local groups and a musical interlude from some of our up and coming musicians from the Bree Supergroup outside the House of Manannan in glorious sunshine.

Valerie Caine

© July 2015

Renewing Old Friendships at the Peel Traditional Boat Weekend

The Peel Traditional Boat Weekend, now in its twenty fifth year, has become a nautical fixture on the Island's event calendar and a natural attraction to the seafaring community, who return annually to sample Manx hospitality and renew old friendships.

It was a great opportunity for members of the public to get up close to a variety of old style vessels, and admire their skill and dexterity as they gathered in the bay for a colourful Parade of Sail, or grouped together at the quayside.

It was a fairly relaxed weekend, following a similar pattern to previous years, which included a range of entertainment along the quayside and the popular Quick and Dirty Boat Building Competition at the tongue, opposite Weatherglass Corner.

A good crowd of people watched a strongly fought race in great weather conditions, testing the ability, or otherwise, of the newly built vessels.

The popular merchandise hub was centred on the recently refurbished Sailors' Shelter on the East Quay, at the heart of the port's sailing fraternity.

Valerie Caine

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