

NEWSLETTER Autumn 2022  
Editor – Douglas Barr-Hamilton

### **A Welcome at St Bride's**

Preparing the newsletter and sharing news of London Manx is always a pleasure and, after a long, hot, dry summer, so is looking forward to temperate harvest weather and to meeting up at our Mhelliagh. Last year a surprisingly good number assembled at St Bride's Church in Fleet Street and enjoyed a wonderful afternoon in the City.

We shall be back on Monday 3rd October for a service starting at 12.00 noon with lunch together afterwards. We hope to see many of you there not only for the pleasure of each other's company but also to cement the excellent relationship with the Church staff that last year engendered.

A well-attended event would be a wonderful start to our 2022-23 year.

**DBH**

### **OBITUARIES**

The Society offers its condolences to their families after the passing of two long-standing and faithful members:

#### **Walter Douglas Wellman**

It was with great sadness that I learnt of Douglas' passing from his sister Freda. Very unlike him, he had missed the Mhelliagh prior to the Coronavirus Pandemic and my attempts to telephone him failed for several weeks. Eventually I found him at home; he had been seriously ill in hospital but was now much better, Indeed, he seems to have recovered completely and it was a shock for everyone that he died unexpectedly on 22nd April.

He had been born on the Island in Douglas in 1944 and always expressed pride that the fact made him a Manxman although his father was a naval officer posted away a year later when the family returned to the UK, tragically dying when Douglas was just four. After finishing his schooling in Fareham, Hampshire, Douglas completed a four-year degree course at the College of St

Mark and St John in Chelsea with a BSc (Hons) in Mathematics and Physics and started a teaching career in various schools and colleges in Hampshire. Outside work, he led an active life. A member of the Territorial Army, he was a detachment commander in the Army Cadet Force, helped students seek their Duke of Edinburgh Awards organising expeditions to Dartmoor and the Peak District and, in his spare time, ran his own computer consultancy company. After retirement, he returned to studies obtaining a Bachelor and then Master's degree in Law specialising first in Revenue Law and then in Maritime Law. From childhood Douglas had a passion for steam engines and trains and when very young he spent hours with his friends at Fareham railway station, collecting numbers and talking to railway staff while, at home, building an extensive Hornby O gauge collection. He was a devout Christian and away from home and school gave a lot of time to helping others, young and old, notably with Sunday School and the Red Cross.

He was also very modest and few were aware of his musical talent and certainly the Society knew little of his achievements. We did know, however, how much he loved the Isle of Man and it was sad for us that because he had arranged a holiday on the Island he missed 2021's Mhelliah organised at short notice. My last conversation with him told us how much he had enjoyed a week in Douglas. We shall remember him and miss him at St Bride's on 3rd October.

**DBH** with thanks to Freda Paul.

**Rose Elizabeth Fowler**



The Society has also lost Rose Fowler who, after a long illness, died on 10th July. A member for most of her adult life, she was our President in 2002 and 2003 and served on the committee for a number of years. Involving herself in our activities, many will have fond memories of a wonderful cooish at her home and her enchanting selling of raffle tickets at other events.

Rose was born in 1931 at Crammag, a hill farm now largely submerged under Sulby Reservoir that had been home to her branch of the Cowley family for many years. Her father was a builder and his family soon moved to York Road, Douglas and she settled there with her parents and three older siblings until she lost her father, a local councillor and Boar War veteran, in October 1939. Coming soon after WW2 had started, things were tough for the family. Nevertheless, the children did well. Fred became an accountant, lawyer Henry rose to be a High Court judge, Marie was appointed deputy head of a prestigious boarding school and Rose became one of the first, perhaps the very first, practicing female chartered surveyor.

She had met her husband at a dance in Douglas and she said he very soon proposed: almost the same night! Both were clever and ambitious but their love created teamwork as they lived and worked in Woking and Glasgow for about ten years before moving to Sanderstead, by then with four daughters. Rose then gave up paid employment but involved herself in the community. As handicap secretary at Croham Hurst Golf Club she attended evening classes to learn how to program so she could calculate handicaps more quickly and was duly elected club captain. Away from the club she was active in local goings-on not least with her neighbours and, all the time of course, bringing up four daughters.

In 2005, having been widowed, Rose moved to Epsom where she continued to be active in the community, joined the RAC to play golf and bridge and went on long hikes. Many of a lifetime's friends from as far afield as Germany,

Scotland, the Isle of Man and Ireland joined with family: four girls, nieces, nephews, grandchildren and great grandchildren to say farewell at her funeral on 29th July at the Surrey and Sussex Crematorium and afterwards the club.

Rose came from determined stock, of course. One of her ancestors was the renowned Sulby Cossack, Cowley Crammag who led the islanders' opposition to enclosure in 1856, an event immortalised in verse, composed and set to music by Mr W C Southward, MLC which he called "The Battle of Pairk-ny-Earkin":

1. Arise! Ye Sulby Cossacks,  
To right and to contend.  
The horn, its sound now calls to you  
Your just rights to defend.  
They stole part of the Mountain,  
And fenced it in as well,  
The Crofters have been driven off,  
Their sheep they'll have to sell.  
*Chorus.*  
*March on! March on!*  
*With crowbar, pick and spade, March on to certain victory.*
  
2. Come! bring your picks and shovels,  
And crowbars too you'll need,  
To level down the new-made fence,  
With thoroughness and speed.  
Forth went those daring Cossacks,  
By Oath each man was bound,  
And soon the fence was levelled down,  
Yes! levelled to the ground.
  
3. Their work was done, and well done,  
And each man did his share;  
Then marched they down the Mountain-side  
Without a fear or care.  
So then on Sulby Claddagh  
Great crowds of people meet,

To, celebrate with buns and tea,  
The big men's great defeat.

**DBH** with thanks to Judith Macfarlane.

### **Railway treats London Manx**

The Society tried something new this summer. Because travel is always easier mid-week, the committee settled on Friday 8th July for its Tynwald Cooish. That we are all getting older played its part in the decision and it would be good if this report encouraged young Manxies in London to join us, even if their stay in London were short, so a different decision can be made next year and, no doubt, a more lively event take place. Not that the pace was slow. We assembled at around one o'clock at Sally (née Kewley) and Peter Miller's home in Cambridge and the sun came out to give us the first hot day of a hot year.

There was some disappointment; one regular who had recently had surgery was not fit to travel and another went down with Covid two days before so both he and his partner were obliged to isolate at home. For the remainder it felt as though we were in Lezayre or Rushen or wherever home was on the Island from the moment we were able to tuck into real Manx kippers. A feast followed as everyone caught up with their neighbours' life and Island news. The hours sped by before we thanked the Millers for a wonderful day and took our leave.

Then the plan failed. Arriving at Cambridge Station, several found there was chaos on the main line to London. However, station staff held up the last expected train to King's Cross, already 45 minutes late, for the secretary and his wife, The president who had walked there along the banks of the River Cam was allowed to use a Liverpool Street service into the capital, some way from home in west London, and the station provided a taxi for two Hertfordshire members. They deserve the praise, saving the day while London Manx looks forward to its mhelliah in October and a special lunch in the Spring, the first for three years.

As mentioned, just two days before we got together Peter Nash tested positive for Covid-19 so neither he nor Stewart Christian could attend: a frustration for them and a concern too for they were due to travel to the Island on 18th July. For those attending there was a brief debate whether we missed the more our

members' company or the delicious cake Peter always produces. Also absent was \*Maureen Wigley whose recovery from a broken hip has been slower than expected. Those present wafted their best wishes to all three and other absent friends as they closed the afternoon singing Ellan Vannin and the National Anthem. "O Land of our Birth," and "O Gem of God's Earth," never sounded so heart-felt.

## **DBH**

\*Stop Press. Maureen was discharged from hospital last week, is delighted to be home and sounded very cheerful when she rang me with the news.

## **Sir Frank Gill**

The BBC will be one hundred years old in a few weeks' time. Originally called the British Broadcasting Company, it was formed on 18th October 1922 and began broadcasting daily from Marconi's London studio, 2LO in the Strand shortly afterwards on 14th November. Frank Gill played an essential part in its creation and it seems right that we remember his contribution as the organisation prepares to celebrate its centenary.

Unlike the other pioneers, Alexander Graham Bell, Guglielmo Marconi and John Logie Baird, Sir Frank Gill is not a household name. It should be remembered.

Frank Gill was born in Castletown on 4th October 1866 but left to live in Southport with his uncles after the death of his father when he was eleven and went on to become a highly talented electrical engineer who was to play a crucial role in the BBC's establishment. When only sixteen, Frank joined the United Telephone Company, eventually managing the Ireland branch after it had been taken over by the National Telephone Company. In 1902 he was appointed Engineer-in Chief and moved to their London office. Until 1912 the company provided the majority of the telephone service in Great Britain as a franchise from the Post Office which also had the right to buy it after a fixed period. After the Post Office exercised that right, Gill formed a partnership with W.W Cook and together they carried out international telephone work in several countries until the first World War began when Gill was appointed to the Ministry of Munitions earning promotion to Controller of the Central Stores

and, at the end of the war, being made an OBE. After four years inactivity, the partnership with Cook was dissolved.

He was elected president of the Institution of Electrical Engineers in 1922 and in his presidential address he proposed that Europe should have a long-distance telephone system equivalent to AT&T in the USA which ran a service between New York and San Francisco. However, it was the French who led the attempt to make this a reality. They convened a meeting of delegates from six of the western European states to form an international consultative committee to establish the technical standards required as different countries had different telephone systems.

The first official radio broadcast was made in 1922 and it triggered a demand from many other stations to apply for broadcast licenses from the GPO. It was clear that there would be chaos if every licence requested was issued and it would be best to have a single broadcasting company. A meeting was called to discuss the issue and, held at the Institute of Electrical Engineers, Frank Gill as its President took the chair and ensured competing factions worked together towards the foundation of a single organisation. The BBC was conceived.

Transmitting on radio only of course, the BBC service was initially just that of a local broadcaster since a national network was technically impossible until its long-wave transmitter in Daventry came into service in July 1925. Prior to that it oversaw a network of separate local stations linked to London by telephone and “simultaneous broadcasting”. These nine stations were in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Glasgow, Cardiff, Aberdeen, Bournemouth and Belfast. Each served an area about twenty miles in radius – although it varied with the quality of the set receiving the signal - and the production used largely local talent. How different it is 100 years on! Eventually television arrived, transmission strengths increased, Overseas broadcasters such as Radio Luxemburg reached our shores and pirate radio stations such as Radio Caroline set up just off them. Change rushed in.

Frank Gill, who was to be knighted in 1941 for services to the telephone industry, continued to work until his death in Geneva in 1950 while attending meetings of the International Consultative Committee on Telecommunication,

helping to create the first transatlantic radio telephone call and build telephone networks in Spain and Japan.

Given Sir Frank's frequent spells in London, I had hoped to find reference to him attending London Manx Society events but, alas, I found none. Indeed, I found no acknowledgement of his roots on the Island. Nevertheless, he remained a Manxman and the Island is proud of him. A blue plaque was placed at his birthplace in Castletown on 22nd May. It reads, "Global Telecommunications Innovator whose leadership ensured the creation of the BBC in 1922."

### **DBH**

Sources: Castletown Heritage, iomnewspapers, Dr Matthew Linfoot, Bob Stimpson,

### **City of Douglas**

Dave Bell's quote, "We just live here," reproduced in our last newsletter did not mean that the town/city did not care that rejection of its application to be given city status was not a blow, or even Dave himself. He kindly sought the reaction of those closely involved so I can give you more of its flavour on the island.

The Very Revd. Nigel Godfrey, dean of the Isle of Man Cathedral wrote, "By custom Peel is called a city, largely because of its Cathedral. Indeed it is known on the Island as 'Sunset City' because of the beautiful sunsets enhanced by the red stone. The first time that it was recorded that Peel was referred to as a city was in a Papal Bull sent to Peel in 1253, which was addressed to the People of the 'Sodor Cathedral City' and the same term is used again in a Papal Bull of 1349. All this has been further re-enforced by other elements of our history: for example, the local newspaper being called the Peel City Guardian so I don't think there are any plans to drop the idea of 'city'. Indeed, it could be argued that we have been a city since the 13th century. We are delighted that Douglas has been given city status on its 150th anniversary as a Town, but we will continue our campaign to have Peel's status rightfully acknowledged."

The Cathedral had led the bid it had been endorsed by the Town Commissioners and local MHKs and local MHK, Kate Lord-Brennan told Dave, "I was disappointed too as were the Cathedral and no doubt Peel Town Commissioners and wider town. I can't advise you as to the basis of the decision as it wasn't decided here and I haven't had any feedback as merely co-sponsored the application as local MHK".

### **DBH**



## **Ramsey Church celebrates 200 years**

The congregation of St Paul's Church in the Market Square, South Ramsey was celebrating on Thursday 18th August two hundred years after its opening. Manx Radio described the opening of a building that was a turning point in Ramsey's growth from a village into a town. Historians will note that its consecration led to the decline of the old Ballure Chapel, in the parish of Maughold, which needed to be rebuilt in 1851 but, continuing with a tiny congregation, again fell into disrepair and was finally demolished in 2003.

However, St Paul's has gone from strength to strength and both the congregation and the townsfolk celebrated its anniversary in style.

### **DBH**

Source, Manx Radio, MNH

## **Drought**

As an island resident I lived in Andreas at Larivane. Although the house was dry enough on a slight rise, the garden was always wet and digging a hole just inches deep resulted in it quickly filling with water. Just recently, my national newspaper included a picture of the British Isles taken from a satellite. While I was not surprised to see the South-east of England a dry yellow colour, I had not expected the northern plain of the Isle of Man to look exactly the same. The island had clearly been hit hard by this year's drought.

The Manx press told me that water levels were 16% lower than average for mid-August and that water levels in the largest reservoir in Sulby stood at 65% while Kerrowdhoo had dropped by 7% to 54%. The overall level was 16% lower than average for this time of year. Manx Utilities had already announced a hosepipe ban from 22nd July, the first in the British Isles, explaining that the water shortage had resulted mainly from an unusually dry spring and a 50% drop in rainfall in June had made things much worse. One interesting additional problem was that they were having to pump water from Sulby Reservoir to West Baldwin Reservoir because it feeds the island's largest water treatment works that supplies Douglas.

As I put the finishing touches to this edition (Monday 22nd August) to get it ready for the printers, the first Manx Grand Prix practice was scheduled.

Naturally it poured with rain and the practice was cancelled. Larivane's garden is turning from sandy yellow back into a green swamp.

**DBH**

### **Island government tackles energy crisis**

Last week the Manx government announced several measures to mitigate the surge in prices resulting from the staggering increases in the cost of fuel. These include another round of targeted support payments in December for those in receipt of child benefit and those on low incomes, the capping bus fares at a maximum of £2 per journey for a three-month trial starting on 1st November and accelerating an £8 million programme to improve energy efficiency in homes.

Treasury Minister Alex Allinson said, "We are shielding households, businesses and organisations from what would have been a sharp and sudden increase in electricity costs of between £16 million and £26 million by March next year. "Instead, people will have that money in their pockets this winter. It is a considerable sum which will help people and businesses to meet rising costs and means this money can circulate in our economy boosting both consumer and business confidence.

"The aim here is to flatten the curve on the cost of living increases and give households a degree of certainty and time to adjust to what may be a longer term set of challenges."

More significant as the island generates most of its electricity from gas will be a government loan to prevent an increase in tariffs by 90% by capping prices at their current level until next year; limiting the cost to all customers at 22 pence per unit until 31st March and avoiding the need for the average customer to find an extra £500 per year. Subject to Tynwald's approval the price cap freeze will be funded by a £26 million government loan to Manx Utilities which will be repaid over the next 20 years.

The minister added, "Providing a loan with a 20-year repayment means that the costs of record electricity prices expected this winter can be factored into bills over a much longer period, cushioning consumers from what would be, for many, crippling price rises."

**DBH**

Source: Manx Radio

### **Acknowledgements**

The editor thanks David Bell, The Very Revd. Nigel Godfrey, Kate Lord-Brennan MHK, Judith Macfarlane, Freda Paul, for their kind contribution and also Isle of Man Newspapers, Culture Vannin and Manx National Heritage. 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](mailto:barrhamilton@btinternet.com)) or mail to 132 Bush Hill, N21 2BS. Copyright is retained by the contributor. Opinions expressed are those of the contributor and not necessarily those of the editor or of the Society.

Closing date for the next issue, 22nd November.

### **September Island Quiz**

(Open to non-members through the web site)

1. Which of these Archibald Knox paintings in the Manx Museum was signed by the artist, (a) Douglas Harbour, (b) Groudle, (c) Kella Mill, Sulby, (d) Union Mills?
2. Was the Isle of Man's first hospital opened in 1850 in (a) Chester Street, (b) Fort Street, (c) Kingswood Grove (d) North Quay?
3. During WW2 did Derek Costain serve (a) on HMS Liberty, (b) at RAF Shawbury, (c) in Royal Engineers, (d) with Royal Marines, Chatham?
4. Returning in 1864 after a voyage from Peel to take Manx miners to the Australian gold-fields, was the schooner, "Vixen" wrecked (a) at Cebu, Philippines, (b) off Penang, Malay Peninsula, (c) near the Cape of Good Hope, (d) on the Calf of Man?
5. Would a Manx speaker describe 2022's summer as (a) charrey, (b) dooin dty ghob, (c) feayn neurillish, (d) shiastey?

Closing date 17th October. The first reader to send me five correct answers will receive a Manx £20 note.

### Answers to Spring Quiz

1. On the sending of the answer, there had been 106 deaths with Covid-19.
2. The furthest point of the Island from Douglas is (b) Point of Ayre.
3. The designer of Laxey Wheel was (a) Robert Casement.
4. The Manx family with an estate at Milntown was (a) Christian.
5. “Cre gollrish yn emshyr jiu ayns Purt ny hInshy whooinney” means (b) What's the weather like in Peel?

Congratulations to Richard Moore from South Africa who tells us that his family’s trip to Europe and the Island will almost certainly be in 2023,

### **Email newsletter**

Our thanks to the members who kindly responded to the request in our last edition to receive the newsletter electronically. Just three responded but that avoids the cost of postage and envelope, not a small amount, but does not cut the more significant printing element as we have a “minimum” print run. Since I prefer “paper” myself, we will not be pushing for more volunteers.

**DBH**

### **Dates for your diary**

#### **Mhelliah**

Monday 3rd October at 12 noon  
St Bride’s Church, Fleet Street, EC4Y 1DE  
followed by lunch nearby

NEXT NEWSLETTER DUR IN THREE MONTHS  
PLEASE SEND NEWS TO  
Douglas Barr-Hamilton, 132 Bush Hill, London N21 2BS  
Telephone 020 8360 8001

Email: [barrhamilton@btinternet.com](mailto:barrhamilton@btinternet.com)

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