

NEWSLETTER Spring 2016

Editor – Douglas Barr-Hamilton

Society activities

Coming up soon is our Annual General Meeting which will be held on Monday, 7th March 2016. back at Casa Mamma Restaurant, 339 Gray's Inn Road, WC1X 8PX (020 7837 6370) near King's Cross station, the same venue as in recent years. We aim to start the meal at 2.00 p.m. after starting lunch at 12.30 to give us time to eat. One or two will be gathering from just after noon for a pre-lunch drink at chat so if you can join us, please do. Members will receive a copy of the Notice and Agenda with this newsletter.

We shall be back at Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, Southampton Row. on Saturday, 7th May 2016 for our Annual lunch. There will not be a lot of time between the next newsletter and this date so if you plan to come, and we certainly hope for a good number again this year, please contact Sam Weller (01223 720607)

We know that many Manx Societies enjoy a Christmas get together each year and our rather informal arrangements seem to have fallen by the wayside in 2015. Perhaps now is the time to discuss something for the end of the year. A sample of other groups' celebration follows and the secretary looks forward to ideas arriving.

DBH

Christmas around the world

Southern Africa

Our association held its Christmas gathering at my home yesterday and included a programme of Manx tales and a Manx carol interspersed with seasonal readings and traditional Christmas singing ending with the beautiful Ellan Vannin and the Manx National Anthem sung in Manx and English. We were all treated to a wonderful tea afterwards and enjoyed time chatting and catching up on local news with each other. Here in South Africa we are desperately needing rain as we are currently experiencing a drought. How different from the island where heavy rains are causing a great amount of difficulty.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you and all of your members our very best wishes for a blessed, peaceful Christmas and happy 2016.

Kevin Williams

New South Wales

The NSW Manx Society enjoyed its Christmas Lunch at Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club. It was well attended with three generations of one family adding to the festive atmosphere. We also enjoyed a New Year lunch at Watson's Bay on 9th January.
Alwyn Piggott.

Wirral

The Wirral Manx Society held a Christmas lunch on 9th December.

Ann Bridson

Published in Manx Tails at the time of our last newsletter, the following might be of interest even though the Christmas season is long past.

Work Off Your Christmas Turkey with a Game of Cammag!

If you fancy working off some of that Christmas turkey, then take a trip out to St John's on St Stephen's Day (Boxing Day) and join in the traditional game of cammag for some fresh air and fun.

The game of cammag is considered to be an earlier form of hockey, and is recognised by its Celtic neighbours, where it is closely related to Irish hurling and camogie, Scottish shinty and Welsh bandy. The word itself is derived from the same root as camanachd - a word associated with a Scottish Gaelic stick and ball game.

Perhaps the first reference to a game with a similarity to cammag was to be found in the Irish Book of Leinste in the twelfth century AD, with an account of a particularly bloodthirsty exchange in the summer of 1272BC.

In his book *Isle of Man Hockey*, Kit Gawne suggests that the game of cammag may have been introduced to the Isle of Man by missionaries, although the earliest Manx record is not found until 1760, when three men and a boy were brought before the church court for playing cammag on a Sunday.

Further descriptions and reminiscences of this popular sport emerge more readily from the nineteenth century, when the game of cammag was played the length and breadth of the Island, using a hooked piece of wood as a stick (maidjey) and a roughly hewn ball made from cork or wood, known as a crig.

It's generally known as a winter sport, (with special matches on St Stephen's Day) with any number of players participating and goal posts often marked with stones, or folded coats.

Often played out in fields, lanes, highways and along the shore (sometimes disregarding any rules which may apply) it's far from a gentle game, as may be identified by the reference of 'cammag leg' for a lame person.

The word cammag also receives a mention in Hall Caine's classic novel *The Manxman*.

One of the more interesting games, however, was probably a match played between Ramsey and Peel, with each town acting as its own goal.

Cammag lost favour with the onset of hockey and football, but a resurgence of interest in recent times has rejuvenated the game and introduced its idiosyncrasies to a new generation.

In keeping with tradition, the game of cammag goes ahead regardless of weather, at 2.00pm on the front green at Tynwald Hill - bring the family and your own cammag stick.

Valerie Caine

© December 2015

(Courtesy of Manx Tails)

Congratulations

The Manx Society of New Zealand, Auckland will be celebrating its 25th Jubilee on Saturday 5th March at the Commerce Club in Remuera, Hawkes Bay. The guest speaker will be Ella Slack, a Ramsey resident who is visiting New Zealand for a few months. Members will remember that Ella gave a very interesting address at our dinner a few years ago.

There has been a New Zealand Manx Society since 1912: founded in Wellington.

Auckland newsletter editor, Robyn, tells me that a New Zealand Manx Society for the Auckland / Waikato region was in existence for many years but went into recess after fading interest by members, until it was revived 25 years ago. Now it rightly celebrates.

The London Manx Society offers its congratulations and best wishes for a successful future.

DBH

Obituaries

Sir Brian Cubbon GCB

This long-time member of the Society died in May last year from a heart attack at the age of 87. After a career in the Civil Service in which he reached the very top rising to be permanent secretary, first at the Northern Ireland Office and then at the Home Office. There were fulsome obituaries in The Times and Daily Telegraph but I am afraid I missed them as I was in France at the time of the death. It is with much regret that belatedly, we publish news of his passing.

His most eventful career unfortunately included being gravely injured in the 1976 IRA car bombing that killed Christopher Ewart-Biggs, the British Ambassador in Dublin and Sir Brian's private secretary while at the Northern Ireland Office and, later, initiating huge reforms of the Home Office under Douglas Hurd.

After his retirement in 1988, Sir Brian continued to be very busy. He helped start a company supplying foreign political and commercial information to corporate clients.

He chaired the Disasters Emergency Committee from 1989, and from 1995 served on the Press Complaints Commission and later was the PCC's charter commissioner, investigating complaints about the way it handled cases and reviewing its standard of service to the public. He was very active in the Campaign to Protect Rural England and, having started it while in Whitehall, ran a sheep farm in Surrey.

But of his Manx connection, I can find nothing save for that distinctive surname and the fact that so busy a man joined London Manx and telephoned its newsletter editor with encouraging comments from time to time which surely combine to give near proof of one. All I can find is that he grew up and went to school in Bury, Lancashire where his father was a primary school teacher. We extend very late condolences to his wife, Elizabeth and their daughter and three sons.

DBH

Col C G Keith Underhill

Keith's son, Mark, also a colonel in the army, has written to let us know that, sadly, his father passed away on 22nd September last year. Like his father, he is an old boy of King William's College and in his current job visits the Island frequently.

Mark extend his good wishes to all London Manx Society members for 2016 and we extend our sympathies to the family. He added that his mother, Doreen, originally from Douglas, in failing health is now in a care home in Formby, Merseyside close to his home.

DBH

Isabel Jean Dennis

Jean Dennis had been involved with the Society for most of her 91 years when, sadly, she died on 7th February after spending the last period of her long life in a nursing home in Fordingbridge in Hampshire. Indeed, her father, Arthur Beresford was very much involved in the Society. Her son, Chris found among her pictures a photo taken of her on a "London Manx Outing about 1930" when she would have been six, along with her aunt Isabel Collister and her mother May (née Collister)

Maisie remembers a wonderful evening a few years ago when "the gang of girls:" herself and Jean with Anita Lucas, Phyllis Long, Mona Fargher, and Maisie Gelling stayed overnight at the Bonnington before the Mhelliagh and they all had a great gossip.

Jean's funeral was held in Salisbury on 17th February but the family plan a memorial service at her old church in Stoneleigh, Surrey, probably in April.

We are all saddened by the loss.

Information from Chris Dennis and Maisie Sell

Mrs Price

Loved and remembered for her affection for the Island where she kept a flat in Ramsey and for her support for her son, Chris, when President of the Society and more recently as a valued member of its committee, Mrs Price was not a member but all who have met her will be saddened to learn that she died on 8th February. We offer our condolences and best wishes to Chris and his brother and will long remember an interesting and hard-working lady, full of character.

DBH

Manx Winner Chosen for Pan Celtic Festival Song Competition

The annual Arrane son Mannin (Song for Mann) competition, which provides the Island entry for the Pan Celtic Festival Song Contest held in Ireland each year, was held at the Masonic Hall in Peel.

It was a successful event, which brought a number of Manx traditional musicians together to entertain an appreciative audience, prior to the competition itself and as the judges made their appraisal.

There were two entries this year, introduced by local Pan Celtic delegate, Fiona McArdle, which were Manx band Glashtyn (goblin or sprite from Manx folklore) which included song writers Andy North and Paul Rogers, who gave a lively and powerful rendition of their composition, Pynt dy Lhune (A Pint of Beer) and local duo Adhene (Themselves), with a gentle song by Paul Cringle and Wendy Hurst entitled Awin Auldyn (Auldyn River).

Judges for the evening were David Kilgallon, Dot Saunders and James Harrison, who gave forty percent of the marks for performance, thirty percent for lyrics and thirty percent for music.

The winner on this occasion was Glashtyn, winning a £300 prize sponsored by Culture Vannin, and securing a place in the Pan Celtic Song Contest later this year. Meanwhile, Manx duo Adhene will also represent the Island at the festival in the New Song in Traditional Style Competition.

Entertainment was provided by Marlene Hendy and Dilys Sowrey, Ruth Keggin, Sarah Hendy and David Kilgallon, Manx Gaelic choir Cliogaree Twoaie, Bob Carswell, members of Tree Cassyn Vannin, Owen Williams and Troor son Daunsin. With thanks to Culture Vannin for their continued support.

Valerie Caine

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William Kennish

A couple of years ago the newsletter published a book review after the publication of the biography of this outstanding Manxman. Born in 1799 to a Maughold farming family, he joined the Royal Navy after educating himself in a life of farm work at home and ships' carpentry in Ramsey. In the navy he became famous for inventing "a method for concentrating the fire of a broadside of a ship of war," and continued working imaginatively on useful inventions. On leaving the navy, he retired to open a school in Ballasalla which he ran from about 1840 to 1845. It seems that this was not challenging enough so emigrated to the United States where, after working with distinction of various engineering projects, his efforts were interrupted by the Civil War and he died in New York City in 1862 where he is buried in an unmarked grave. Robert Stimpson, author of the book reviewed, is trying to raise sufficient money to erect a memorial on the spot and hopes to make one from Manx granite and ship it from the Island to the cemetery. Sadly, an attempt to raise the sum required through a "Crowd Funding" project failed to attract sufficient support and, as another fund raising effort is likely, members will want to know that the Committee offered to donate £100 for this project with a similar sum pledged by the North American Manx Association.

DBH

Kirk Michael's Oie'll Verree Brings in the Crowds

Despite an array of contemporary entertainment, the annual Oie'll Verree in Kirk Michael still attracts a full house to the Ebenezer Hall, situated in the centre of the village.

Many, but not all, of these concerts have fallen by the wayside in recent years, although this particular event continues to grow in popularity. Now organised by members of Michael Heritage Trust, the evening follows a tried and tested format which draws people from all walks of life; and indeed from various parts of the Island. The lynchpin of this year's event was southern based farmer, Paul Costain, who skilfully introduced each performance with cheerful alacrity and a few quips of his own - ably supported by accompanist Marilyn Cannell.

The first part of the concert followed a typical pattern, with entertainment provided by Manx Gaelic choir Caarjyn Coidjagh, traditional dancing by Louise and Matt Callister, an interlude of magic from Juan Moore and a selection of local recitation from Pam Evans and Rebecca Traynor.

But it's the Manx dialect play which attracts the most attention.

This year Matt and Juan Callister brought something new to the Manx stage, before everyone settled down for the main feature; A Cat and Dog Life by the late Kathleen Faragher. Its two characters, Betsy Quaggan and Kirry Taggart, were played admirably by Marilyn and Chrissie Cannell.

There's been a resurgence of interest in the local dialect poet, Kathleen Faragher, who was born in Ramsey in 1904, and went on to become a popular writer and performer.

She was a prolific writer of books, poetry and short stories, acknowledged as one of the most important dialect poets on the Isle of Man.

After her death in 1974, she was buried in a family grave at Kirk Maughold, but lately it was realised that her gravestone needed some attention, which was carried out by Gregg Memorials and funded by Culture Vannin.

A project dedicated to recording memories of Kathleen Faragher is currently underway with Culture Vannin. If you have any memories you would be willing to share, contact the project organiser, James Franklin, at manxliterature@gmail.com, or c/o Culture Vannin, P O Box 1986, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM99 1SR.

Valerie Caine

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Thirty Port St Mary residents killed

"Explosion!" That was the answer to the first question in our last quiz and Colin Gill provided the correct answer as to what it was that killed thirty Port St Mary residents three days after Christmas in 1852. It was one of the events in the Island's history covered by Ramsey Courier journalist Sydney Boulton in January 1969 in his column, "Peeps into the Past," a fascinating compilation of the best of them having been collected by Sue Woolley in her book of the same title.

A Liverpool ship, the 160 tons brig, "Lily," en route to southern Africa with a cargo including rum and about 40 tons of gunpowder, had been driven off course during a fierce gale when east of Dublin and run aground during the week-end on the rocks at Kitterland in the sound between the Island and the Calf of Man and nobody was aware of it until Monday morning when 13 survivors, some badly injured, struggled into the village, having lost three shipmates, carried off in the waves and tide. It had been a calamitous weekend and the Lloyds agent was busy with another vessel aground off Langness so appointed a sub agent from Port St Mary and instructed him to take off the cargo. He and a party of local men, including the senior police officer and a constable, set off early next morning.

It seems that one or two held back, rightly fearing it was unsafe and, of the group that boarded the ship, only one survived: his name James Kelly. From his account and the testimony of others watching from a distance, it appears that smoke started to pour from the hold and that, after an argument about what they should do, it was decided to continue to try to salvage the cargo. Immediately, there was a tremendous explosion. So big was it that there are reports that it was heard in Douglas and debris was found fully five miles away. The cause was never satisfactorily explained. James Kelly testified that no naked flame was used and that the men were trying to cut a way into the hold to pour water on the fire. He also mentioned a strong dirty smell before the explosion and it may, therefore, have been a case of spontaneous combustion.

It was a disaster for Port St Mary: 22 windows, 74 orphans. unidentifiable bodies making mourning difficult.

DBH

Sources, Peeps into the Past, Sue Woolley 2010 with kind permission, Manxnotebook.

New governor for Island

The Society will have a new Patron and the Isle of Man a new governor when Adam Wood's five-year term ends in April. His successor will be Sir Richard Gozney, a retired diplomat. His distinguished career included being Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Bermuda from 2007 to 2012, British High Commissioner to Nigeria from 2005 to 2007 and British Ambassador to Indonesia from 2003 to 2005. He has also worked in Argentina, Spain and Swaziland. Since retiring, he has been non-executive director, a post from which he recently retired.

He says that he and his wife visited the Island a few years ago and, having fallen for it, they are looking forward to moving to Government House and to meeting the Island's people.

DBH

New Chairman for Manx Radio

It has recently been announced that Manx Radio will have a new chairman with immediate effect following the retirement of David North at the end of last year. He is already a director of the company having joined the board in July 2015. Bill Mummery is also chief executive of Celton Manx Ltd., a provider of on-line betting and casino products. He also chairs the charity Housing Matters, tackling homeless on the Island. He has lived on the Island for nearly fifteen years after working in broadcasting for many years.

DBH

Source: iomtoday

New life for Queen's Pier?

It's over three years since I saw news of Ramsey's pier, long closed after sustaining damage in 1991. Now it's in the headlines again. An engineer named, Tom Durrant has initiated a survey which he hopes will be completed by April leading to the award of a lease to the Queen's Pier Restoration Trust to begin work. Initially, this will involve the first fifty metres which he thinks will have to be widened to give space for a Winter Garden incorporating a tea room and the terminus for the pier tram as well as ten foot walkways on each side. All this will cost about £100,000 and Mr Durrant says work won't start until all the funds have been raised.

The pier will be 130 years old in July and is reported to be in a good structural state so it will be lovely if work could start but the Restoration Trust says it is looking for an architect to design all that's to cover the area.

DBH

Source: iomtoday

Death of the Horse Tram

In late January iomtoday reported that Douglas Council had announced that this famous service would run no more. It seems that its continuation would require the amalgamation of the stables site in Tramway Terrace and tramway hub at Strathallan at a cost of £2.9 million, money that would have to be borrowed over 30 years attracting interest of £1.9 million. The stable buildings will now be sold off, the rolling stock donated to museums on the Island and the horses found good homes.

DBH

Boost for the Deaf

The (London) Times of 17th January reported another successful trial of innovative telephone products by Manx Telecom. This time it's software that boosts the sound wave frequency that the subscriber struggles to pick up and in a four-week trial 92% of users reported superior clarity.

Large scale trials will begin on the mainland in June, funded by the Wellcome Trust.

DBH

Mountain Road closed again

Members planning to visit the Island during the Spring will want to know that it is planned for the Mountain Road to be closed between Ramsey and Creg-ny-Baa from 11-23rd April for repairs. The winter's storms have done considerable damage and the state of the road has to be excellent for the TT races. A scenic diversion for those going to Douglas from the north of the Island and wanting to avoid the busy route through Laxey will be available via Tholt-y Will.

DBH

Restoration of railway crossing gatekeeper's cottage

There are government plans for work on the neglected track-side cottage in Mount Gawne Road, Colby, reported iomtoday last month. This will involve alterations inside the cottage including demolishing internal walls to allow the creation of a one-bedroom cottage with en-suite bathroom. It will comprise additionally a kitchen and living room. The roof will have to be replaced as will some of the rafters, french doors will provide a second exit and inappropriate windows exchanged for double-glazed wooden sash windows.

With the railway running alongside this original stone gatehouse with extension, views for travellers will be improved and they will know where they are with the replacement of the sign, "Ballagawne Crossing".

Planning consent is still required.

DBH

Snowdrop Walk Attracts Afternoon Visitors to Dalby

In response to the relentless wind and rain of the past few months, supporters of St James Church, Dalby, came out in force to join the annual snowdrop walk, followed by afternoon tea.

Meeting at Dalby House, by kind permission of Mrs Clarke, visitors were invited to stroll amongst the garden, where a plethora of snowdrops basked in the glory of praise and endearment.

With local man, Michael Killey, on hand to answer questions, this carpet of white blooms was, perhaps, a signal that hope springs eternal. Potted snowdrops were also on sale for budding enthusiasts and experienced gardeners.

Fortunately, the predicted heavy rain held off until everyone had decamped to the nearby church, for a sumptuous afternoon tea by a roaring fire in the schoolroom, provided by a team of helpers at Dalby.

There was a welcome on the mat for each visitor, with every table tastefully decorated with vases of snowdrops, together with generous plates of sandwiches and a large selection of home-made cake.

Proceeds from the event will be divided between St James Church Restoration Fund and this year's chosen charities, Craig's Heartstrong Foundation, which provides vital screening for young people and Excellent Development, a not-for-profit organisation which supports rural, dry-land communities to work their way out of poverty in some of the most vulnerable parts of the world.

Valerie Caine

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Island Quiz

(open to non-members through the web site)

1. Rushen Abbey belonged to the Order of
(a) Augustinians, (b) Benedictines, (c) Cistercians, (d) Franciscans?
2. A cast of the hand of the "Sulby giant" Arthur Caley can be found at
(a) Clanaugh, Sulby, (b) East Craig, St Jude's, (c) Glen Duff, Lezayre, (d) Rose Cottage, Regaby?
3. The meaning of "Cliogaree Twoaie" is
(a) Eastern Chanters, (b) Northern Croakers (c) Southern Groaners, (d) Western Singers?
4. Which contributor to the LMS Newsletter does *not* sing with Cliogaree Twoaie
(a) David Bell, (b) Mavis Bell, (c) Terence Brack, (d) Valerie Caine?
5. The term for a governor of the Isle of Man is
(a) 3 years, (b) 4 years, (c) 5 years, (d) 6 years?

The first reader to send me five correct answers will receive £20

Answers to December's quiz:

1. (a) an explosion (see article in this issue) .
2. (a) MER started service in 1895 .
3. (d) four Archdeacons are buried at Andreas (Mylrea, Hall, Moore, Glass).
4. (b) Dumbell's Shaft was Laxey Mines' deepest.
5. (a) The Big Ditch (Manchester Ship Canal).

There was no all correct set of answers to our last quiz.

Acknowledgements

The Editor thanks , Ann Bridson, Valerie Caine, Chris Dennis, Alwyn Piggott, Maisie Sell, Mark Underhill, Kevin Williams, Suzanne 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, 25th May.

A Seasonal Poem

Spring

The short day lengthens,
The weak sun strengthens,
The grass looks greener,
The air is cleaner.
Through pearly light can I gaze
On the willow trees' haze
Of jade buds, soft and slender,
A promise of splendour.

Maisie Sell

Dates for your diary

A.G.M.

Monday, 7th March 2016
at 2.00 p.m. after 12.30 lunch at
Casa Mamma Restaurant, King's Cross

Annual lunch

Saturday, 7th May 2016 at
Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, Southampton Row.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DUE IN THREE MONTHS

PLEASE SEND NEWS TO:

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