

## **Christmas Gathering**

10th December

Southampton Row was no longer in the sun's rays and darkness was falling fast as a sprinkling of Manx men and women entered the former Bonnington Hotel, long a place for London's islanders to gather where we were once again made to feel welcome. It was another chance to chat and catch up with the news while sipping a drink in a warm and comfortable environment.

"Not many of us here," was the verdict, "But well worth the effort of coming along."

**DBH**

## **AGM**

Our annual general meeting, formal notice of which accompanies this newsletter for Society members, will be held on Tuesday 19th March at Casa Mamma Restaurant, 339 Grays Inn Road, WC1X 8PX

We aim to open the meeting at 2.30 p.m. after assembling for lunch at 12.15. Everyone is encouraged to lunch at this good Italian restaurant not only to honour our promise in exchange of a meeting place free of charge but also to enjoy a happy time together.

## **Manx folk songs in London**

17th April Lecture

Island born Stephen Miller will be giving a lecture in April that may be of interest to many members. The title describes the talk perfectly, "The Gill brothers and their collecting of folk songs from the Isle of Man (1894-98)"

WH Gill and his brother Deemster J F Gill did an immense work towards the end of the Victorian era in collecting Manx folk song and music, the former being instrumental in producing the Manx National Song Book of which we will all probably be aware. Stephen Miller has a BA in history and an MA in folk life studies, both from the University of Leeds, and takes a special interest in Manx folk lore, folk song, folk dance and the figures and collectors involved with the Celtic Revival.

The lecture will be on Wednesday 17th April 2019, starting at 7.30 p.m. and will be given at Cecil Sharp House, the headquarters of the English Folk Dance and

Song Society, 2 Regent's Park Road, NW1 7AY. Tickets cost £8 and seats can be booked on [www.vwml.org/events](http://www.vwml.org/events).

It would be great if we could have a good contingent from LMS to support the speaker.

**DBH**

### **Manx Museum Sunday Opening**

The trustees of Manx National Heritage have confirmed their intention to continue opening the Manx Museum on Sundays. The announcement comes nine months into a year-long trial of Sunday opening which launched as part of the 2018 Year of our Island.

Its director, Edmund Southworth said, "When MNH prepared its business case for trialling Sunday opening, it identified a number of criteria against which success would be measured. After almost nine months of operation, it is clear that the trial has been a success.

"Research findings include 66% of visitors saying they combined their visit with an event, shopping or eating out in Douglas, indicating a positive contribution to the local economy. Audiences have been broadened too and there is also a greater proportion of local residents visiting on Sundays with people citing that it is the most convenient day for them to visit.

MNH will now be requesting that an order be brought before Tynwald by its sponsoring department, Department for enterprise, to amend the museum's opening hours in accordance with the Manx Museum and National Trust Act." If approved, revised opening hours will be applicable from 1st April 2019.

**MNH**

### **Flitters**

Thanks to a film released last year, an old Manx custom is being revived.

Similar to other nations, the Manx traditionally eat shellfish on Good Friday (Jy-heiney chaist). However, the tradition has a particular twist in the Isle of Man: Good Friday breakfast had to be flitters: limpets in English, and its popularity was described as phenomenal by E Kermode in 1885 when he wrote, "Large numbers of both sexes wended their way to the rocky shores and creeks especially around the south and west coasts of the Island for the purpose of collecting flitters."

Others, including AW Moore and W Walter Gill also attest to the custom.

The cooking of Good Friday flitters was rather unusual as there existed a superstition that no iron could be used on this day out of respect for the iron used to nail Jesus to the cross. So instead of an iron pot, they were cooked in their own shells in the embers of the fire.

James Franklin of Culture Vannin commented, "Traditions like this are important in many ways in our island today. Of course, these kinds of customs connect us to the past and to nature. But more importantly they offer us a way to be more Manx and to feel a little bit more connected to the place we call home."

We were made aware of the tradition in a video produced for Culture Vannin's web site last year which shows the cooking of flitters and, probably much more useful, how to get them off the rocks (with a stick, suddenly)

The Port of London Authority advice is that London Manx should not revive the custom by the Thames.

**DBH**

Source: Culture Vannin

### **Manx history on display in York**

We have society members in Yorkshire and many living nearer York than London so don't hesitate to let readers know of the 35th annual Viking Festival at Jorvik Viking Centre, York.

Included in the items exhibited will be the necklace, excavated on the Island from the Pagan Lady's grave at Peel Castle, one of the richest Viking age female burials outside Scandinavia.

Edmund Southworth, Director of Manx National Heritage and chairman of the Destination Viking Association said, "Working with other organisations is a vital part of our work in promoting the Isle of Man's Viking cultural heritage. We are proud to be part of the wider community of heritage sites and museums who promote understanding of the Vikings in Europe and world-wide. The Isle of Man and York are part of the Council of Europe's Viking Route of Cultural Heritage and our collaboration has grown over several years.

The burial of the Pagan Lady over a thousand years ago is important because it illustrates the high status of some women in an age traditionally associated with male domination. Her pagan burial within an already established Christian cemetery is also significant, indicating a willingness to share a special place. The necklace has previously featured in the BBC and British Museum series, "A History of the World in 100 Objects.

Mr Southworth continued, "The necklace will be displayed alongside other artefacts from the Pagan Lady's burial including a large amber bead, miniature pestle and mortar and a fossil ammonite charm, which we are delighted to share with our partners at JORVIK."



### The Pagan Lady of Peel, Isle of Man

These artefacts come from the unusual 10th-century burial of a middle-aged woman of status found in a stone-lined grave. Her head was veiled and rested on a feather pillow. Among her possessions were two knives, iron shears, needles and a comb. She wore (1) a necklace of glass, amber and jet beads.

Other items included (2) a pestle and mortar made of a flint and a piece of mudstone, (3) an ammonite, (4) an amber pendant and an iron rod or staff covered with textile, feathers and seeds. This unusual group suggests this woman may be a 'volva' or staff bearer, a powerful sorceress buried with the tools of her trade.

Loan courtesy of Manx National Heritage

[manxnationalheritage.im](http://manxnationalheritage.im)

The necklace and artefacts from the Isle of Man will be on display at JORVIK until August 2019.

To coincide with the display of the necklace, representatives from Manx National Heritage will be speaking at a number of events in York including the 2019 Viking Festival, "Follow the Vikings Roadshow" and the final best practice seminar at the Creative Europe project.

**MNH**

### **Mollag Ghennal Celebrates 25th Anniversary**

The much loved, annual Mollag Ghennal, which has its roots in the Garden Room of the old Villa Marina, before the Mollag Band took over the baton from the Calor Gas Ceili Band in 1993, celebrated its twenty fifth anniversary during the festive season.

It's a tried and trusted format still favoured by the event's many followers, who enjoyed a relaxed evening of mostly local entertainment at the Manx Legion building in Douglas. This year organisers welcomed Sel Edwards who

provided both Welsh and Manx music, local singer/songwriter Matt Kelly, Imbolc (hotfoot from performances in Belgium), up-and-coming group Scran with their new album Nane, father and son duo Frank and Jamie Joughin and Manx dancers Skeddan Jiarg.

Meanwhile, the Mollag Band presented a new dimension, described by lead vocalist Greg Joughin as the musical equivalent of modern art, with groups of lyrics connected simply by vague association. An abstract image formed through the ears of the listener, a kind of melodic Matisse.



Supper was provided by the Mollag Kitchens.

As well as the usual self-penned, original songs from the Mollag Band, the evening concluded with a revolutionary mix of community singing linking Victorian music hall and Manx folk classics from the 1970s.

**Valerie Caine**

© January 2019

### **Good Clean Fun:**

#### **A Social History of Britain's First Holiday Camp**

This new book, which charts the success of the revolutionary Cunningham's Young Men's Holiday Camp on the Island, is not only informative and revealing, but proves beyond doubt that the concept of the holiday camp began on the Isle of Man.

Written by Jill Drower, great grand-daughter of Joseph and Elizabeth Cunningham and published in conjunction with the 120th anniversary of the

camp, her book is packed with more than one hundred and fifty illustrations and lots of detail about how and why the Isle of Man is unequivocally linked with the beginning of the holiday camp phenomenon.

The story draws on the author's family history, (they became bakers for Cunard and other shipping lines during the nineteenth century), but the driving force behind this publication is the desire to put back on record that the camp was the template from which others followed, including Billy Butlin.

Jill's research sets the scene by exploring the life of her forebears who settled by the docks in the North End of Liverpool, which became notorious for its destitution, beer houses, brothels and Irish migrants. Joseph Cunningham became involved in their lives through the practices of the Presbyterian church, followed by his work for the Gordon Institute and latterly the Florence Institute, which in turn led him to the Isle of Man.

Cunningham turned around the lives of the most challenging of the boys who came into his care and was recognised as an ideas man, but Jill's book acknowledges the growing realisation of Elizabeth's true position in organisation and management, as opposed to a simple supporting role.

Additionally, it focuses on the transformation of a boys' camping holiday to holiday camp, its role as an internment camp during World War I, as HMS St George in World War II, its subsequent sale to a syndicate and its connection to the famous Lynskey tribunal.

Launched in Liverpool, London and the Isle of Man, it's now available from several local outlets as well as through Amazon - priced £25.

The book is dedicated to the memory of Jill's brother, poet and satirist Roly Drower, who encouraged her research and died ten years ago.

**Valerie Caine**

© December 2018

(Courtesy of Manx Life)



Young Men's Holiday Camp, Douglas.



## **Uncovering History**

Douglas's article in the last Newsletter about Chloe Wooley finding the Yn Chruinnaght London Manx Prize, given in the late 1990s for a young solo instrumentalist, put my mind at rest as I was sure I had read about that prize in the Ramsey Courier on visits to the Island. Readers might also be interested that when we cleared out and sold my mother's house in Bride, we brought back various trophies, medals and certificates of hers. Amongst them were two Yn Chruinnaght medals for Patchwork, pictured below, that she won in 1981 and 1982. I wonder if any our Newsletter readers have Yn Chruinnaght medals or information about the competitions?

My next step is the Manx Newspaper Archives and will let you know if I find out more.

### **Sam Weller**



### **Pat Corrin**

Ten years ago, as many members will remember, The London Manx Society welcomed Jack and Pat Corrin as the Guests of Honour at our Annual Lunch. Sadly, Pat, who was honoured with an OBE for services to Manx education, young people and families in 2001, and a well-known figure in the Manx performing arts community, died in September last year. Pat will be remembered for her contributions to, amongst many, Cruse Bereavement, Manx Blind Welfare Society and the Manx Music Festival, widely known as The Guild. Jack, a former First Deemster and Clerk of the Rolls in Tynwald, gave an entertaining and very informative talk at our Lunch in 2009 and Pat was a charming guest perfectly at ease with all the members who attended. Interestingly, the picture accompanying her tribute on Manx Radio's web site is cropped from a picture taken at the lunch!



Following his appointment as First Deemster in 1988, Jack successfully encouraged the legal profession in the Isle of Man to re-energise itself with young people. He was known as a constitutionalist and supporter of charitable causes and honoured with a CBE in 1995 in recognition of his years of public service to the Island. Consistent with their focus on charitable causes, Jack and Pat asked us for a donation to the Manx charity, Kemmyrk (Manx for shelter), which supports homeless people in the Isle of Man, in lieu of the normal present for our Guest of Honour.

**Sam Weller**

### **Ancient ring found in Manx field by metal detector**

A Manx silver ring found by a man who was metal detecting is thought to date from between 1400 and 1500 AD. It was found by Gordon Graham from Edinburgh, in a field in the north of the Island. The ring is engraved with geometric shapes and when he found it in May of this year Gordon Graham reported his find to the landowner and the Manx Museum (Thie Tashtee Vannin). Finds of archaeological interest on the island must be reported to Manx National Heritage within two weeks. Manx authorities have now declared the ring to be officially classed as treasure and the finder will be rewarded. It has been described as a medieval iconographic ring. Which was an item of jewellery worn in the Middle Ages as an adornment and symbol of status and authority. It was also seen as having long lasting personal and protective meaning to the owner, that would remain with them throughout their life. The ring is on display at the Manx Museum.

**Alastair Kneale**

### **St Bridget - A Woman for Our Time**

With the rise in feminism and raised awareness of the environment dominating the headlines, advocates may look towards an inspirational leader to guide them through their campaigns, but historically St Bridget, who has links with the Isle of Man, may well tick all the boxes.

Believed to have been born near Dundalk, County Louth, in the mid fifth century, St Bridget (Brigid (Irish) Breeshey (Manx)) is a much celebrated



figure in Ireland, typically remembered for establishing an abbey and church in Kildare on a site now occupied by St Brigid's Cathedral. However, confusion arises with similarities to a goddess of the same name and many believe she is a merging of two people, sitting on the boundary of pagan mythology, Druidism and Christian spirituality.

St Bridget, whose feast day is celebrated on the 1st February, is said to have held a unique position in the Irish church and society of her time, and as Abbess presided over the local Church of Kildare and was leader of a double monastery for both men and women.

Stories and legends abound about St Bridget, but what emerges is a portrait of a strong and gentle woman, a powerful leader, good organiser, skilful healer and a wise spiritual guide, who presents what is termed the feminine face of God. Often depicted as a peacemaker, this has been immortalised in the St Bridget's Cross, a token of goodwill between neighbours after a local quarrel. A version of this may also be found on the Isle of Man.

The timing of her feast day sits perfectly with the celebration of spring, new life and St Bridget's natural attunement of the seasons and cycle of nature. She was often referred to as the Saint of Agriculture. She has been designated a patron of many things, from chicken farmers and fugitives to printing presses and sailors, but the list also includes babies, children whose parents are unmarried, dairy-maids, infants, midwives, milk-maids and nuns.

Although time blurs the edges of historical record, it's widely reported that St Bridget visited the Isle of Man as a young girl to receive the veil from St Maughold, although other sources place this ceremony elsewhere. At this point she is said to have founded the Nunnery, near Douglas, ultimately dissolved during the sixteenth century, but historians have been frustrated by lack of reference and a long term dependency on traditionary evidence.

However, there's no doubting that she was a popular saint on the Isle of Man. You'll find her name on both a northern parish and its church and seven ancient keeill (chapel) sites, as well as the aforementioned nunnery. Her effigy is also said to be represented on the ancient cross close to the churchyard at Kirk Maughold and on the armorial bearings of the Manx diocese. St Bridget's Chapel, probably dating from the twelfth or thirteenth century, on the Nunnery estate survived, becoming stables before re-established as a place of worship from the late nineteenth century until 1998, when it was deconsecrated.

Meanwhile an old custom practised on the eve of St Bridget's Day on the Isle of Man involved gathering a bundle of green rushes, standing with them on the threshold of the house and inviting the saint to visit; ensuring peace and plenty for the coming year. Some might also sweep out the barn before placing a bed, chair and table with bread and cheese, a lighted candle and a quart jug of good Manx ale in expectation of the desired visitor.

A Manx folksong, collected by Mona Douglas from Mrs Bridson of Glen Maye, entitled Invocation to Saint Bridget, readily underpins this tradition.

**Valerie Caine**

© January 2019

(Courtesy of Manx Life)

### **Another demand for the Chronicles**

The Times of 7th January reported that Bill Henderson MHK has called for the return of the Chronicles of the Kings of Mann and the Isles to be returned by the British Library. He is said to have promised to continue with other members of Tynwald to call for their repatriation and Edmund Southworth, director of Manx National Heritage is said to be happy to support any initiatives undertaken by the Manx government. The British Library, like the British Museum, is forbidden by law from changing the ownership of any of its possessions but the suggestion of Daphne Caine MHK that their permanent loan could be a solution would be a way round the ban.

LMS members had the privilege of seeing the Chronicles some five years ago so many will want Island family and friends to enjoy the same delight but, with Greece demanding the return of the Elgin Marbles from Britain, Italy the Mona Lisa from France and Egypt a host of treasures from around the world, it might be too strong a precedent.

**DBH**

### **John Callow**

We are pleased to welcome as a new member Dr John Callow, from Leicestershire. Many members will remember him as a fascinating speaker at our lunch in 2015 on the subject of the Civil War, Commonwealth and Restoration and its traumatic effect on the Island.

One of the Maughold Callows, he is a personal friend of past president Alastair Kneale and we look forward to meeting him again at a Society event in the near future.

### **Do you know "Miss TT 1975"?**

Manx National Heritage is interested in making contact with three ladies who are pictured in this image from TT 1975. Pictured in elegant outfits and wearing a sash with reads, "Miss TT 75," these three elegant ladies are dressed very differently from the TT pit girls we see today.

If you recognise any of the three ladies - perhaps they're your mum, grandma, relative or friend, then Manx National Heritage would be interested in hearing from you. Anyone who can help is asked to contact Matthew Richardson at MNH. Email [matthew.richardson @mnh.gov.im](mailto:matthew.richardson@mnh.gov.im) or telephone 01624 648053.



### **Island Quiz**

(Open to non-members through the web site)

1. The House of Manannan is to be found in (a) Castletown, (b) Douglas, (c) Peel, (d) Ramsey?
2. Cashtal yn Ard is a (a) natural rock outcrop (b) Neolithic tomb (c), 9th century fortress, (d) 17th century army training area?
3. Castle Rushen clock appears on the Manx coin of the denomination (a) 10p, (b) 20p, (c) 50p, (d) £1?
4. The Orchid Line runs in (a) Ballaugh, (b) Castletown, (c) Douglas Head, (d) Port Soderick?
5. The missing Mary Weller Yn Cruinnaght award for Solo instrumentalist 11 years and under was found at (a) Andreas Village School, (b) Gaiety Theatre, (c) Manx Museum, (d) Ramsey Town Hall?

### **December Quiz Answers**

1. Fixing the price of (a) flour led to the 1918 general strike on the Island
2. Maisie Sell used to write poems about (d) Marks & Spencer.
3. "Carvals" are (b) Christmas carols,
4. The foundation stone of (d) the Tower of Refuge was laid in 1832
5. The Anvil is on the Island's (b) south coast.

First all-correct answers came from Richard Moore of Durban, South Africa for the second quarter in succession and starts building up the spending money for his next visit to the Island.

### **South African reader wins second successive London Manx quiz.**

For the first time ever in September the five question quiz that has been a feature of the London Manx Society newsletter for many years was won by a non-member. It has always been possible as each edition is published on the Society's web site and the chances have gradually increased as Manx societies around the world make greater use of the internet to share their news.

Richard was born and grew up on the Island, living in Kirk Michael where his parents worked for Kelly Brothers wood-carvers. He went to Kirk Michael Primary School, then one term at Albert Road before going to Ramsey Grammar School. He then studied and worked in England prior to going to South Africa with the intention of staying two years but has never left. In his student days, he worked on the construction of Cummal Mooar in Ramsey and his mother resided there until just over seven years ago.

Richard was last on the Island in 2010 but hopes to return soon for another visit. He still calls the Island home and is proud of his Manx heritage.

Mylchreest Motors will be providing the prize for London's March quiz, donating £20 petrol for a car hired from them. No doubt he will encounter sterner competition this time.

### **Acknowledgements**

The editor thanks Valerie Caine, Alasatair Kneale, Richard Moore, Sam Weller, for their kind contribution and also Isle of Man Newspapers, Culture Vannin, Yn Cruinnaght 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 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 the Society. Closing date for the next issue, 24th May.

### **Dates for your Diary**

Tuesday 19th March 2019

#### **AGM**

at Casa Mamma Restaurant,  
339 Grays Inn Road, WC1X 8PX  
Starting at 2.30 p.m.  
Lunch at 12.15

17th April 2019

**Lecture**

Manx folk songs in London  
Cecil Sharp House,  
2 Regent's Park Road, NW1 7AY  
Starting at 7.30 p.m.

Saturday 1st June 2019

**Annual Lunch**

Doubletree by Hilton  
92 Southampton Row, WC1B 4BH  
12.00 for 12.45 p.m.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DUE IN THREE MONTHS

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**Visit the Society's web site at [www.londonmanxsociety.co.uk](http://www.londonmanxsociety.co.uk)**