

NEWSLETTER, Spring 2022
Editor – Douglas Barr-Hamilton

Annual General Meeting

This edition must begin with apologies. We have two. The first is that we felt it best to postpone the annual general meeting from the date we published in our last edition. Sam Weller, our valued treasurer was due a knee operation (just done and seemingly successful) but he was not going to be fit to travel by that date and the committee wanted the benefit of his wisdom and experience as we prepare for the future. It has now been rearranged for Monday 16th May. The committee hopes to see many of you at St Martin's for a mid-day lunch beforehand and a visit to the National Gallery (or a demo) afterwards.

The second is for the late arrival of the newsletter. A problem with my computer coincided with my catching Covid-19's omicron variety which meant it could not be repaired for more than two weeks and one delay led to another. I'm sorry if you have been worried at its non arrival and trust you will now be able to enjoy our Manx news from London.

DBH

CORRECTION

Prom work to continue into March

A news item in early December told me an item in our last newsletter was inaccurate. It seems that work on Douglas Promenade will still be in progress in March according to the infrastructure minister who warned that completion is still some way off.

That said, in mid January a press report spoke of confusion resulting from differing rules about junctions to begin with. The roundels on Douglas promenade are continuing to cause confusion for drivers, with some even claiming they are making the road dangerous. Most of the jobs remaining to finish the Douglas Promenade refurbishment are 'minor tasks', according to the Infrastructure Minister.

In the last few days it has been announced that these works will start on 14th March on the first section of Queen's Promenade, moving to Central Promenade

a fortnight later and from Harris Promenade to Loch Promenade at the end of the month when there will be a one-way northbound route for traffic between Victoria Street and Broadway. During the works there will be parking restrictions in their vicinity.

DBH

Four hundred years plus two

Postponed from 2020 because of the Coronavirus pandemic, the North American Manx Association has rescheduled its celebration of 400 years of Manx in America on the arrival of Myles Standish with the Pilgrim Fathers. Appropriately, it will be held in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

It will run from Thursday evening of 4th August with a time to meet and greet to be followed next day with a Colonial Tour that includes a 45 minute tour of the Mayflower replica as well as a fascinating trip to the Plimmoth Patuxet living museum and, on Saturday, workshops and a banquet.

What a brave group it must have been who risked everything to a tiny ship and an unknown world to seek religious freedom! London Manx wishes their descendants and their successors a worthy celebration.

DBH

Irene Craine

We were saddened to hear after posting our December newsletter that Irene, secretary of Wirral Manx Society had died last August after contracting pneumonia following a short stay in hospital. We have passed our society's condolences to her family.



Born Irene Reid in Edinburgh in 1932, she lost her mother when aged nine and her father only three years later and was brought up first by a married older brother in Kirkcaldy and, after her sister had married, in Edenfield in East Lancashire. After finishing her schooling she started work as a GPO telephonist based in Rawtenstall but working throughout the area and it was here that she met Bill Craine, one of eight children from Douglas. They married in 1955 and went to live on the Island where their eldest daughter was born but moved to Birkenhead when Bill started work as a tax officer the following year. Sons Andrew and Peter were born in 1959 and 1963 respectively.

Bill died 1976 but Irene continued an active member of the Wirral Manx Society and was both membership secretary and secretary for a while. One of the objects of expatriate Manx societies, including our own, is to look after the needs of Island folk in their area and this was quite a burden for the society in view of the large number of Manx people spending time in Clatterbridge Hospital so Irene was a regular visitor there. The society had a reputation for its lunches and the tribute at her funeral stressed how much she loved those. Above everything else, however, she was a family star and, with so large a family, will be deeply missed.

DBH

With thanks to Pete Craine

Manx Honours

Three Manx residents were recognised in the Queen's New Year's Honours List for 2022.

Colin Leather is due to receive an MBE for his long service to the community of Castletown. He's one of the Island's longest standing chairmen and has held the position in the southern town on six occasions.

Bernadette Williams will also be awarded with an MBE for long service to the Isle of Man and the Royal British Legion. A member of the RBL's Women's section from 1983 to 1995, she has been a Standard Bearer for the Isle of Man County and North West Region and won the Great Britain Standard Bearer title for five consecutive years. On retiring from ceremonial duties for the RBL, she was appointed Sword Bearer for Tynwald, a duty she has carried out for the last 25 years.

Alexander Townsend is to be awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to Isle of Man education. In the 1990s he had the brilliant idea of the "Computerbus" which was launched in 1998 to teach primary school children the creative use of computers, a work he continued until 2020.

In addition, a former Manx resident Kimberley Rogers (nee Lowe) receives the British Empire Medal for services to her community in Oldham, through the Real Education Empowering Lives Community Interest Company to provide activities, experiences and personal development.

DBH

Source, Manx Radio

Remember Miss Dickson?

Underneath his floorboards in Harpenden, Andrew Beasley has just found a letter that has been lying there since 1953. It's an invitation to a Society event addressed to member, Miss G Dickson. Very thoughtfully, Mr Beasley would like to send it to Miss Dickson's family. Sadly, our records of the period were lost some years ago so if any member remembers Miss Dickson and knows her family, please let me know.

DBH

Wanted for Cregeen Family Tree

There is a letter in a recent edition of the Isle of Man Family History Society, magazine from a member trying to find members of her family. Her grandfather was Samuel Cregeen, born in Port St Mary in 1867. While our membership list

does not include a Cregeen, it's a name I have heard mentioned. If you think you can help, do contact cmariapaterson@hotmail.com

DBH

The 2021 Census

Last year's census has revealed a tiny increase in the number of residents. According to the results published at the beginning of February giving details from the 2021 census which took place on 30th May, the Island's population has grown by just 0.9% since the last census and shows 84,069 people now reside on the Island. It was 83,314 in 2016.

Where people live has not changed much but we expats may be interested to know that the largest population outside Douglas (26,677) is Onchan's with 9,030 residents. Ramsey is the most populous town with 8,288 inhabitants followed by Peel with 5,710 and Castletown with 3,206 although the latter's total is now smaller than Port Erin's 3,730, larger than Port St Mary's 1,989 and Laxey's 1,656. Braddan is the largest of the country parishes with a population of 3,404 while only 359 people live in Bride.

Residents' place of birth is also interesting. The percentage of the population born in the Isle of Man fell slightly from 49.8% to 49.6% while that born in the United Kingdom fell by 1.7%. Interestingly, the number whose nationality corresponds to a country in the European Union has risen from 4,184 to 4,728, some 13%.

The economically active population: people aged 16 and older and either seeking work or waiting to start work, increased from 42,777 in 2016 to 44,875 in 2021 and the number of people in employment has increased by 1,930 (4.6%)

The average age of residents increased from 42.5 to 44.4 years old.

DBH

Source, iomtoday

Laxey Wheel under repair

Work has begun to repair Laxey's landmark. Manx National Heritage contracted Auldyn Construction to begin the first phase of the project in January. It will replace the old and defective timbers and repaint the wheel,

housing, railings and viewing, the work taking some four months. It will cost some £300K

“We are delighted and extremely grateful for the assistance of the Laxey Mines Research Group,” said John-Paul Walker, Historic Buildings Architect for Manx National Heritage, the charity responsible for the Island’s natural and cultural heritage.

“Their expert volunteers will also be undertaking essential preparatory works for the second phase of the work. The Laxey Mines Research Group has been directly involved with the Laxey site since the 1980s and will bring unparalleled expertise and knowledge to the project. The second phase of the works will repair the T-rocker along with the rods, bogies and rod duct”.

Plans are being put in place for managed public access to see the work as it happens, providing a fascinating insight into the skills and challenges involved in the repair and conservation of this iconic monument. Conservation work on this scale to the Lady Isabella only takes place once or twice in a lifetime and the start of the project marks a significant moment, not only in the history of the Laxey Wheel but also of our Island.

Designed by the Victorian engineer, Robert Casement, the wheel was completed in 1854 to pump water from the depths of the Laxey mines using water from Glen Mooar to power the wheel. The impressive 22.1m (72.6 feet) diameter structure found immediate popularity and has remained one of the Island’s most iconic and dramatic attractions for 168 years.

DBH

Source Manx National Heritage

Tribute to Terry Cringle

A number of members regularly read the Island’s newspapers, often on line and will have witnessed the bravery with which its regular reporter, Terry Cringle faced ill health and be saddened by the news of his death at the age of 91 in mid-February. He had retired just two years earlier, having started in journalism

at the age of 17 in 1948 working for the Isle of Man Examiner. He was soon required to leave to do National Service following which he worked for newspapers in Southport, Nottingham, Newcastle and finally the Manchester Evening Chronicle. He returned to the Isle of Man and the Examiner in 1962.

Seven years later he went freelance and, joined by Alan Bell, set up the first in-house news service at Manx Radio as well as working for UK newspapers and as a broadcast reporter for the BBC and Border Television.

Isle of Man Newspapers editor Richard Butt said, “Terry was an inspirational man and something of a mentor to younger reporters. I remember being slightly in awe of him as a junior reporter in the early 90s. In the last 12-plus years, he wrote our nostalgia pages and came into the office most days to collect post and photographs. He continued to write those pages until he was 89, at the beginning of lockdown.

Terry had asked that any donations in his memory be made to Manx National Heritage and the organisation’s tribute recognised Terry’s immense contribution to the Isle of Man’s heritage. Terry spent many hours at the Manx Museum researching stories of the Isle of Man, curiosities, nostalgia and ways of life, sharing his research with radio and newspaper audiences around the world.

The organisation said, “We were exceptionally touched to receive news of Terry’s wish for donations in his memory to be made to Manx National Heritage and we are enormously grateful for every gift our charity receives in his memory. The Trustees and staff of Manx National Heritage send our sincere condolences to Terry’s family and friends.”

London Manx is saddened by the news.

DBH

Scallop fishing in Ramsey Bay

I’m not sure about its significance but members may be interested that towards the end of last year permission was given for a two week period in January to allow fishing in Ramsey Bay’s marine nature reserve to collect sustainably

sourced scallops. It's usually an area which is kept off limits but it was to be opened up. Ten local vessels were given permission to enter the area.

The Manx Fish Producers' Organisation is quoted as saying, "It's a collaborative approach which shows that fishing and flourishing eco-systems can co-exist successfully."

DBH

Source: Manx Radio

Cold and wet

The Island's new governor, Sir John Lorimer and his wife, Lady Philippa seem, from media reports, to be exceptionally busy in joining Islanders' activities.

One of the bravest must have been taking a dip in the icy waters of Douglas Bay on New Year's Day. We understand that it is the first time in history that a Lieutenant Governor has taken part in a New Year's Day dip, joining something like four hundred others plunging into the bay and raising funds for the charities Breast Cancer Now and Beach Buddies.

There were a number of other intrepid ventures into the Irish Sea that day and we understand they were at Castletown, Port St Mary Chapel Beach, Port St Mary Inner Harbour, Brewery Beach in Gansey, Port Erin, Ramsey and Peel.

DBH

Source, Manx Radio

New look Grand Prix

The Manx Grand Prix will return this year but a number of changes were announced with the news, the biggest being that the event will now run for nine days instead of fourteen.

The changes in the motorcycling classic are aimed at allowing sufficient marshalling cover: an increasing problem, reducing the overall cost for taxpayers and minimising road disruption for residents and businesses.

Ned Bowers, of the Manx Motor Cycle Club, is confident interest from racers and spectators will be high when the races return:

DBH

Source, Manx Radio

Pandemic update

"The numbers have been creeping up in the week in which we go to print," is how we ended our last report. Sadly, almost immediately the rise became more

rapid just as it did in England and in late December the Chief Minister, Alfred Cannan called for a national effort to tackle Covid spread, warning that the Isle of Man must prepare itself for a difficult few weeks adding that it will require a national effort to tackle the spread of the Omicron variant assumed to be the dominant strain locally. The increase in the number of cases was affecting staffing across the Island including in healthcare, with visiting being restricted in Manx Care settings. The Island now had the worst national rate in the British Isles although it was better than in the north west of England, the number of vaccinations having fallen dramatically in the week before Christmas.

The figure eventually fell below 2,000 on 9th January and the vaccination uptake increased. Statistics gradually improved as they got better on the mainland too and early in February most travel restrictions were removed. However, a gradual increase in the daily number of new cases restarted and there were 132 new cases in one day at the beginning of March bringing the total number of Island cases to over six hundred. Although the Omicron variant prevalent seems to be mild, the number of deaths from the disease has risen to eighty. For a while I had hoped this would be our final “Pandemic Update.” Now I’m not sure as Manx case numbers have again crept past a thousand and Nobles’ Covid ward is to reopen.

DBH

North American Manx shrink and grow

In its latest newsletter, North American Manx Association reports a slow decline in the number in membership along with a steady increase in the average age of its members: exactly like the London Manx. However, unlike our society, it reports an increase in activity engendered by interest in the Manx language and in use of Zoom and is clearly looking forward to its postponed convention in August.

At the same time it is encouraged by the formation of another individual association in December, in the state of Oregon. The initial group will be meeting in the town of Salem but it hopes to attract attention throughout the state.

DBH

Viking brooches shine at Manx Museum

In December 2018 two stunning Viking Brooches were discovered on the Island by metal detectorists John Crowe and Craig Evans and they went on display in

the Manx Museum on 17th December. The highly decorated oval brooches date from around AD 900-950 and are made from bronze with silver wire decoration. The beauty and delicate intricacy of the design of these brooches has now been fully revealed following a specialist conservation process.

The brooches were discovered alongside a glass bead and buckle, the finds requiring specialist examination and conservation undertaken by Manx National Heritage and conservation specialists at York Archaeological Trust. The process of conserving them started with x-rays to reveal details not visible to the naked eye. They were then cleaned, removing corrosion and soil, before coating with micro-crystalline wax to protect them. At the time of their discovery, Manx National Heritage, the charity responsible for the care and promotion of the Island's natural and cultural heritage, commissioned a targeted archaeological excavation of the find site to establish whether any burial remains were present. Archaeologists from the trust conducted a small excavation on site but no grave was found.

Commenting on the discovery, finder, Craig Evans said, "John and I knew straight away that our discovery was very special and it's great to see the brooches cleaned and conserved".

John Crowe added, "It's very rewarding that they are now on display at the Manx Museum, for everyone to see and enjoy".

Assistant Conservator for York Archaeological Trust, Sandra Toloczko, added: "Restoring the artefacts has been a process that has used all the key skills of our specialist team here in York, revealing the beauty of these unique, delicate objects from conditioning through to careful packaging for transportation to the Isle of Man, so that they can be displayed in their full splendour for the public to enjoy."

Oval brooches are relatively common in Viking Age Scandinavia and are seen almost as national dress, showing that the wearer was most likely of Scandinavian origin. The absence of this type of brooch from the Isle of Man before now has led to theories that it was only the men from Scandinavia that settled on the Isle of Man in the early Viking Age.

Allison Fox, Curator for Archaeology at MNH explained that the Isle of Man has a rich Viking heritage and the Manx National Collections reflect it. This type of brooch, worn by Scandinavian women in the Viking Age and usually found in graves, has been missing so far. In addition to the brooches, there was also one decorated glass bead made in Ireland and a belt with bronze fittings, most likely made in the Irish Sea area. Although proud of her Scandinavian roots, this particular pagan lady also wore local fashions”.

Vikings arrived on the Isle of Man in the 800s, firstly trading and eventually settling. They were maritime people, and the position of the Island right in the centre of the British Isles meant that it was perfect as a base first for trade, then for settlement. The Manx Viking legacy is still very evident, not least through the modern parliament, Tynwald, which has its roots in this period. There is still a strong Viking influence to be seen in the landscape, with castles, burial mounds and settlements all visible.

The two newly conserved brooches are now on display in the Viking Gallery at the Manx Museum, Douglas, alongside many other spectacular artefacts from the Viking Age on the Isle of Man.

DBH

Source, Manx National Heritage

New lifeboat for Ramsey

After delays to training caused by the pandemic, Ramsey has just received its new Shannon-class lifeboat, the Ann and James Ritchie II and many of the townsfolk turned out to welcome enthusiastically the state-of-the-art vessel in blustery and chilly conditions

Replacing the old boat, the Mersey class lifeboat Ruby Clery, the £2.2 million, jet powered Shannon is faster, more manoeuvrable and equipped with more modern technology. It is the second of its kind to be stationed in the island, after Peel’s Frank and Brenda Winter, which became operational in October.

DBH

Postcard perfect pictures

A new art exhibition opened at the Manx Museum on Saturday 22nd January entitled ‘Day For Night – A Season in Douglas’ which explores the visual

transformation of Douglas into a postcard perfect holiday destination from the heady days of tourism during the 50s, 60s and 70s. Using the vivid, vibrant colours of the holiday season, Martin Hearne's collection of work will transport visitors back to brightly coloured beach balls and evenings spent under the bright lights of Douglas promenade.

Martin Hearne attended the Douglas School of Art from 1966 to 1968 before going on to study painting at St. Martin's School of Art in London. After many years teaching art at various schools and colleges he became head of Ceramics at Bradford School of Art, a post he held until retiring in 2015. He has recently returned to his love of painting. His work is inspired by Edward Hopper, an American realist painter, especially his sense of light, as well as John Sloane and the Ashcan School of Art.

Martin explained his 'Day for Night' project:

"I started the series of works in this exhibition with a collection of colourised Douglas at Night postcards that I had accumulated over the years. The coloured additions often clumsily applied to black and white photos had an abstract charm and vividness that echoed the vibrant colours of the season.

"In the summer Douglas became this other place, brighter, vibrant: the colours had shifted, there was a plastic shine on things, the sounds were different, voices had changed and newspapers wrote about the accents that could be heard on the streets in the coming weeks. These are the thoughts that circled round as I painted my pictures. I see them as an exploration and celebration of the now all but vanished mass tourism of the Island that I remembered from the 50s to the 70s.

"The postcard with its optimism and glamour has been a source for many of these paintings along with personal photographs from the 60s and 70s and some recent drawings I made of the still visible holiday infrastructure. Most paintings show a particular time of day where the time is narrowed down to a moment and the shadows are frozen. Often my focus has been on a single moment like the holiday snap or with a particular quality of light sometimes both. I've tried to recover the nostalgia of childhood and adolescence not in a specific way but in a way that tries to avoid sentimentality. These paintings are an attempt at a

portrait of a disappeared Island, a summer-time of working class holidaymakers who transformed the Island each year.”

The paintings have been transported to the Island with the kind support of Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. Brian Thomson, Isle of Man Steam Packet Company Managing Director, said, ‘Day for Night – A Season In Douglas’ will provide visitors with an intriguing look at the Island’s capital at its tourism peak, no doubt stirring fond memories for many. We are pleased to offer our support to Manx National Heritage in transporting Martin’s collection to and from the Island and we hope as many people as possible take the opportunity to enjoy the exciting exhibition.”

Katie King, Curator for Art & Social History at Manx National Heritage added, “We are delighted to welcome Martin Hearne back to the Isle of Man to showcase his evocative paintings of Douglas during the holiday season and extend our thanks to Isle of Man Steam Packet Company for their support of the exhibition.

“This will be his first major show on the Island since exhibiting his ceramics at the Manx Museum in 2005. We know his artwork will strike a chord with visitors to the Manx Museum, especially during the cold winter months. His depictions of Douglas dressed in all its holiday finery and the simple pleasures of going ‘promenading’ on a warm summer’s evening will certainly bring back some happy memories.”

Past exhibitions of both ceramics and paintings by Martin have included group shows in London and at the Leeds Design Innovation Centre; and solo exhibitions at the South Square arts centre, Bradford, The Bingley Gallery and at the Manx Museum. The exhibition starts in January at the Manx Museum, open from 9.30am to 4.30pm. There will be a special opportunity to meet Martin Hearne in the exhibition gallery from 2pm - 6pm. All the artworks in the exhibition are available for purchase.

DBH

Source, Manx National Heritage

March Island Quiz

(Open to non-members through the web site)

1. The King of Norway ceded the Isle of Man to the King of Scotland in the Treaty of (a) Bergen, (b) Perth, (c) Rothesay, (d) Trondheim?
2. The name of the French naval captain buried at Bishopscourt is (a) de Villeneuve, (b) Latrude-Tréville, (c) Roze, (d) Thurot?
3. The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's first diesel powered ship was named, (a) Conister, (b) Fenella, (c) Peveril, (d) Victoria?
4. The 1821 Potato Riots took place in (a) Castletown, (b) Douglas, (c) Peel, (d) Ramsey?
5. "Caisht sonney dhyt," means (a) a dirty spot, (b) Happy Easter, (c) Have you enough money? (d) Ring the bells?

December quiz Answers

1. We can dip our toes in the sea on Fenella Beach in (b) Peel.
2. The parish church lost half its tower during World War II is (a) Andreas.
3. The physical educationalist whose methods were inspired by Manx cats was (c) Pilates.
4. The Snaefell Mine disaster took place in (d) 1897.
5. Tommy Big Eyes surname was (b) Gellin(g).

Congratulations to Sam Weller who was first with a set of five correct answers. A £20 note will be sent for him to spend on his next visit to the Island. The closing date for the current quiz is 14th April.

The first reader to send me five correct answers will receive £20 in fuel when hiring a car at Mylchreest's Car Hire at Ronaldsway Airport: closing date 14th April. Our thanks to Mylchreest's for their continuing generosity.

What were we doing?

With our next edition arriving at the same time as the country will be celebrating the Queen's seventy years on the throne, I thought it might be topical, if only 69 years later, if we recalled what we were doing on 2nd June, 1953. It would seem interesting to discover how different parts of the Island marked Coronation Day. My own recollections of Andreas are hazy but I know I was there as I still have the mug and medal I was given.

Could as many of us as possible drop me a few lines, please. I'm sure we would all enjoy your day even all these years later.

DBH

Late news, good news

It was, of course, unintended but the delay in getting this newsletter to you means we can bring you the news that Loganair is about to restart direct flights from London to Ronaldsway. Announced on 11th March, there will be a daily flight from City Airport from 19th April, increasing to twice a day on 3rd May and daily flights from Heathrow will begin on 3rd May.

DBH

Acknowledgements

The editor thanks Pete Craine, Alastair Kneale, Sam Weller and also North America Manx Association, Isle of Man newspapers, Manx Radio, Manx Music Today, 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) 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, 18th May.

DBH

Date for your diary

Annual General Meeting
Monday, 16th May at 1.30 p.m.
St Martin's-in-the-Fields
Trafalgar Square
Preceded by lunch in the Café in the Crypt

NEXT NEWLETTER DUE IN THREE MONTHS

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LONDON MANX SOCIETY

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