



FOUNDED 1895

# **London Manx Society**

**(Yn Cheshaght Manninagh Lunnin)**

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

**President – Alastair Kneale**

**NEWSLETTER Spring, 2024**  
**Editor – Douglas Barr-Hamilton**

## **Growing**

We read in its recent newsletter that the North American Manx Association is having a recruitment drive on its side of the Atlantic and here in London with the encouragement of both new and old members of its committee, London Manx wants to see growth too. The Society's next event will be its annual lunch so we want to encourage as many as possible to attend.

We will be back at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel in Southampton Row on Saturday, 18th May at 1.00 p.m. and the price of £35 seems a real bargain for central London. As the RNLI is celebrating its bi-centenary this year, we shall make lifeboats, the institution and William Hillary the theme of the event.

**DBH**

## OBITUARY

### **Pamela Joyce Fiddik**

17 April 1939 - 6 February 2024

A longstanding member and committee member of the London Manx Society, Pamela Fiddik, nee Kewley, died at her home in Ickenham, Middlesex on 6th February 2024 after a long struggle against the after-effects of a stroke she had suffered in 2014. Pam is survived by her husband of 64 years, Cornishman Mike Fiddik, and their children, Andrew (who lives in Australia) and Sally (now Cameron), and four grandchildren.



Pam was born in Douglas in 1939, the eldest of the three daughters of Norman and Ivy Kewley – the youngest daughter Sally remains an active member of London Manx. Pam attended The Buchan School, but the family emigrated to New Zealand in 1955. This did not suit Pam very well at that time, and after a few years she came back to live in England. The rest of the family followed soon afterwards and they lived in Looe, Cornwall, where Pam met and married Mike.

Pam and Mike moved to live and work in London. They bought their first house in West Ealing and have lived in Ickenham since 1975. They both worked in Mike's successful shopfitting business, and Pam found time, whilst being a working mother, to take a degree at Brunel University, Pam being determined to compensate for her secondary education having been disrupted by the move to New Zealand. After Andrew moved to live in Australia, when visiting

him and his family Pam and Mike would also travel to New Zealand and visit friends with whom she kept in touch from her time living there. Family members on both sides have continued to live on the Isle of Man, and Pam visited the Island regularly, even when her mobility had been badly affected in recent years. Pam and Mike were regular attendees at the London Manx Mhelliagh, the Cooish, the lunches and other events.

London Manx Society offers condolences to Pam's family, and the members of the Society are saddened by her loss.

**Sally Miller**

### **Stormy Weather**

The weather around the Irish Sea has been wild for much of the winter with a record number of storms leading to damage on the Island and disruption to air and sea travel. Indeed, some 46 Steam Packet passenger sailings were cancelled between October and the end of the year compared with 29 in 2022 and 26 in 2021 and the bad weather continued into 2024.

Unusually, as the ninth of the season approached, the Steam Packet's new flagship "Manxman" had to sail into the gale and shelter off the Welsh coast as staying in harbour when huge waves threatened to crash the hull into the jetty walls was too risky. Yet all did not go well. In Storm Force 10 winds, a number of ceiling panels within the Niarbyl Lounge came adrift and the damage required the temporary closure of the lounge during sailings that week

Later in the month there were heavier than usual falls of snow. The thaw quickly came but was followed by a month of heavier than usual rain. All this has left the Island looking beautiful and everyone is hoping for a brilliant summer.

**DBH**

## **Penny plan makes UK headlines**

One edition of The Times covered the proposal in three separate places one day late in January. The Island's treasury minister, Dr Alex Allinson had proposed abolishing the 1p coin citing both the cost of its production and a move towards a cashless society as the reason. The abolition would be a slow process with a cessation of the minting of copper coins for the Island and an encouragement of traders to round prices to the nearest 5p. The coin would not cease to be legal tender but would gradually be withdrawn from circulation, reminding older folk of the occasional farthing being pushed into your hand long after any price including less than a ha'penny was found on goods.

The paper's editorial includes an opposing view, however. At present the coin's existence provides a modicum of protection against rising prices as those £1.99s would be rounded up and not down if it were done away with and, as they provide an easy donation in boxes at checkouts, charities would suffer.

**DBH**

## **Herring back on Manx Menus**

Last year we reported that for the first time for many years Manx fishermen were allowed a quota for catching herring in the Irish Sea. However, at just 100 tonnes, the hastily assembled fleet of just three boats landed the maximum haul within a few weeks and most of it was sold fresh to local restaurants, kippered or frozen for bait to support the island's crab and lobster industry. Shortly before Christmas the industry's 2024 limit, double the amount at 200 tonnes, was announced leading to greater optimism among the fishermen that a commercially viable Manx fishing industry could become a reality for the first time in 25 years since the quota could be quadrupled by 2026.

The fish has been part of Manx life for centuries but the catch had already declined substantially because of dwindling stocks when quotas were introduced in the 1980s by the EU Common Fisheries Policy and in recent years boats have concentrated on scallops. Although the quota is for a twelve month period, herring arrive in Manx waters in late spring or early summer so, if you are going home in the next few weeks, there could be a familiar scene on the quayside.

**DBH**

Source iomtoday

## **Bradda Mines**

“Deep Inside Bradda Mines” will be the title of a talk at Erin Arts Centre in Port Erin next month. It will be given by members of the Laxey Mines Research Group whose volunteers have spent years exploring the North Bradda mine at Bradda Head. However, it’s not just exploring; it enters the mine as part of a government initiative to ensure the plethora of workings on the island do not pose a risk to the public. Some details have been given as an introduction to the talk.

Their work is to eliminate risk to the public: capping shafts, sealing passages and organising signage. It gives them the opportunity to explore and investigate. In the mine they found routes to the levels of the various workings to extract copper and lead and outside to a ledge on the cliff where the old engine house used to pump water from the workings was now in a dangerous condition. The effort has turned the workings effectively into an experimental working mine by removing tons of rubble from the tunnels and constructing bridges over shafts, ladderways and platforms. Yet there is much more to learn about Bradda and it will take many more years to discover it all but, for the amazing things found to date, we must wait until 4th March.

There is another mine at South Bradda, yet to be explored intensively, and it may be that each was accessible to the other but connecting tunnels are yet to be discovered. Both were operational over three distinct periods: during the bronze age, perhaps 1,500 BC as a stone hammer dated to 1,200 BC had been found at the South Bradda mine, during the 12th century by Cistercian monks from Furness Abbey who set up the house at Rushen Abbey and for the late 19th century from 1840, work ceasing when it became uneconomic. I wonder if any redundant workers then emigrated to provide today's members of the Manx Societies.

**DBH**

Sources: Manx media

### **Warmer water attracts tiny fish**

Manx newspapers told us that in February that Jon Russell-Dunn, a volunteer at the Manx Wildlife Trust, identified a new species of fish in Manx waters last year. He identified a 'Small Headed Clingfish' (*Apletodon Dentus*) in Douglas Bay. The fish, which reaches a maximum length of four centimetres, has only been recorded in Ireland three times, while they are predominately found around the south of the UK.

A spokesperson from the Manx Wildlife Trust said, "Due to their small size and the possible confusion with its more common cousin the 'Two-Spotted Clingfish' (*Diplecogaster Bimaculata Bimaculate*), they could be under reported. However, their presence could also be the result of climate change."

**DBH**

Source, iomtoday

## **Freezing Fun**

The early birds went in a couple of hours after low tide at ten in the morning from Chapel Beach in Port St. Mary, some rushing into the icy sea, others dipping a toe to test the temperature. Forty-five minutes another group followed suit at the inner harbour, then, as the hours passed, the scene was reset at the shore in Gansey Bay, Port Erin, Ramsey, Castletown, Peel, Laxey and, finally at one in the afternoon, in Douglas Bay.

Hundreds joined the New Year's Dips around the island's coast to welcome in the new year as friends and families plunge in to the Irish Sea. Some came in groups: Castletown Ale Drinkers Society, organisers of the island's longest running New Year's dip, had a good turnout as the event celebrated its 60th anniversary; the Southern Dippers ran into the sea around Port St Mary and Port Erin. They have been running the dips for more than 20 years, and in that time have raised more than £72,000 for primarily island charities. This year they helped Anaphylaxis UK, with all the money raised staying in the island. Ramsey supported Ramsey RNLI and the Friends of Bunscoill Rhumsaa. Peel had a huge turnout and made a splash for MS Society Isle of Man, Peel RNLI, and Manx Breast Cancer Support Group. Laxey and Douglas also had large crowds, with the latter being started by Lieutenant Governor Sir John Lorimer and Lady Lorimer.

**DBH**

Sources: Manx Radio and iomtoday

## Shipwrecks

Shipwrecks are always fascinating. For an island whose history is so much bound up with the sea, problems with shipping affect a large number of people.

It would be impossible to include all the ships wrecked around the Manx coast so *Strandings & Sinkings: shipwrecks in Manx waters* approaches the subject from a slightly different angle. It concentrates on the photographs. Unsurprisingly, pictures of wrecks are not particularly common. If your vessel is sinking beneath you, you have better things to do than pose for a selfie, and the weather is unlikely to be bright and sunny. However, the book gathers together a remarkable collection. There are drone pictures of wrecks hidden in secluded coves, underwater photographs of boats lying on the seabed and several of rescues in progress. These ships were mute witnesses to great heroism (and occasionally great idiocy), and their stories provide an insight into the lives of those who crewed them. And not all the boats featured were truly wrecked. There was no saving some, but many of the boats were raised, repaired and refloated.

*Strandings & Sinkings* covers nearly 200 years of shipwrecks, including that of Racehorse, the wreck which prompted William Hillary to found what became the RNLI. As the 200th anniversary of the founding of the RNLI approaches on 4 March this year, *Strandings & Sinkings* shows why an organisation devoted to saving lives at sea is so important.

*Strandings & Sinkings: shipwrecks in Manx waters*

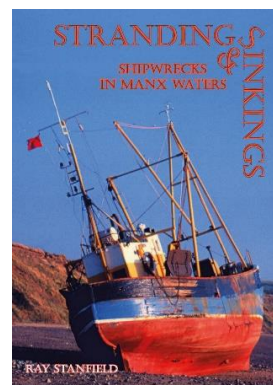
ISBN: 978-1-908060-41-9

Retail price: £19.95

**Sara Goodwins**

Fourth Manx Bard

Loaghtan Books, 01624 818292





## **Manx Museum illustrates the theme**

The new 'All at Sea' exhibition exploring the Isle of Man's remarkable maritime heritage and honouring the 200th anniversary of the RNLi opened at the House of Manannan on Saturday 17 February 2024. It uncovers some of the tragic events in Manx waters which led to the establishment of the institution.

Allison Fox, Manx National Heritage Curator for Archaeology explained, "Over two thousand ships have tragically met their final fate around the coast of the Isle of Man. All have a place in our Island's history from trawlers to merchant vessels, paddle steamers, lifeboats and leisure crafts."

The fate of more than twenty vessels are explored in 'All at Sea', alongside lifesaving equipment, medals and poignant objects from the Island's shipwrecks. The gold medal awarded to Sir William Hillary for founding the RNLi has kindly been loaned to the exhibition by the RNLi Heritage Collection Trust.

The story of the Herring Fleet Disaster features in the exhibition in which thirty-six men and fifty boats were lost in Douglas in 1787. Just one incident of thousands in only 12 nautical miles of Manx waters, 'All at Sea' presents stories of some of those shipwrecks and their inextricable link to the foundation of today's RNLi. The stories told include those of the wreck of HMS Racehorse, off Langness in 1822 and of the 'Saint George' in 1889 when the full fury of a north-westerly gale did not deter the volunteers of the Peel lifeboat. The exhibition continues until 5th January 2025 at the House of Manannan in Peel. Admission is free, with donations welcome.

**DBH**

Source, Manx National Heritage

## **National Art Gallery reopens**

The Isle of Man's National Art Gallery has officially reopened at the Manx Museum. The new display features a mixture of historic and contemporary pieces by Manx artists or artists inspired by the Isle of Man and its people. The gallery includes a vibrant new colour scheme, over 130 artworks, creative story telling interpretation, and a section dedicated to how the collection is cared for.

For over 100 years Manx National Heritage has been collecting art for the people of the Isle of Man and it is varied and eclectic, including everything from the earliest-known views of the Isle of Man and engaging portraits of Manx society figures to an internationally celebrated internment art collection. Works by leading Manx artists John Miller Nicholson, Archibald Knox, Bryan Kneale, Kevin Atherton and Michael Sandle; and Manx related pieces by George Romney, Anthony Van Dyck, John Opie, Samuel Walters and Alan Millner can be seen. They can be seen alongside fine art, sit naïve pieces and folk art, together with sketchbooks by amateur artists: some 6,000 pieces in all.

There is an area dedicated to how the collections are cared for and include some pieces that are in poor condition but salvageable through highly specialist conservation work as well as light sensitive artworks to be viewed in a newly created dark room

The Manx Museum is open daily, 9:30am – 4:30pm and is free to enter. Donations are welcome.

**Manx National Heritage**

## **Solution to December Quiz**

1. The name of the latest Steam Packet ferry is (c) Manxman.
2. The song, The Laxey Wheel was written by (c) Stuart Slack,
3. According to the 1981 film, “Chariots of Fire” the British Olympic team travel from Dover to Calais by (b) IOMSPCo.
4. Honda first won a TT race in 1961 (the 250cc)
5. HMS Quillam was a WW2 Q Class Destroyer.

The only all-correct answer came from Sam Weller. Well done, Sam!

## **Acknowledgements**

The editor thanks Sara Goodwins, Sally Miller for their kind contribution and also NAMA, 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, 24th May.

## **Dates for your diary**

Annual lunch, Saturday, 18th May 2024,  
Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, Southampton Row, WC1B 4BH  
Details on page one

NEXT NEWSLETTER DUE IN THREE MONTHS  
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