

NEWSLETTER Summer 2021  
Editor – Douglas Barr-Hamilton

**Together again**

It will be the first gathering of London Manx folk for eighteen months when the society holds its traditional mid-summer meeting at the beginning of July. English lockdown and travel restrictions have prevented occasions as diverse as our annual lunch, mhelliah, cooish and pre-Christmas get-together. However, the committee is relatively confident that folk will be able to meet up in a month's time and Sally and Peter Miller will be opening their house and garden in Cambridge for us on Saturday 3rd July from about 1.00 p.m.

All hope many will join the group. Kippers and soft drinks will be provided and you are asked to bring food that can be shared, liaising with Sally please when advising her of your participation: phone 01223 502007 or email [sallymiller7@gmail.com](mailto:sallymiller7@gmail.com)

We suggest travelling by rail using the 11.42 a.m. departure from King's Cross to Cambridge, making it easier to share a taxi to 225 Chesterton Road, CB4 1AN and easing parking in its locality.

**DBH**

**Steve Rodan retires**



His five year term of office as President of Tynwald comes to an end in mid July so Hon. Steve Rodan OBE will be stepping down as one of our honorary patrons. The Society is most grateful to him for the interest he has shown in our affairs in the midst of a busy life as a senior politician. Originally from

Scotland and a pharmacist by profession, he came to the Island in 1987 and was a member of the House of Keys representing Garff from 1995 to 2016 serving as Speaker from 2006 and Deputy President from 2007. He was then elected President. We wish him a long and healthy retirement.

### **Chief Minister not to seek re-election**

Early in May the Island's Chief Minister, Howard Quayle, revealed in a TV interview that he had decided not to stand in the general election due in September. This means he will step down after the election. He will have served ten years as member for Middle and five as the Island's chief minister in which role he has managed the Coronavirus pandemic and from which he will stand down as soon as a successor has been chosen in October.

He explained, "In 2011 I decided to stand for the House of Keys out of concern for our Island's future following the significant change to the revenue sharing agreement with the United Kingdom as well as the after effects of the global financial crisis. I set out with a clear focus to secure a prosperous future for our Island, one that we could hand over to the next generation.

"My time as Chief Minister has seen arguably two of the greatest challenges to face the Isle of Man since the Second World War: Brexit and COVID-19. I am proud of what this administration and our Island have achieved together, particularly in responding to the pandemic. It has been a real team effort."

**DBH**

Source: Manx Radio

### **Ida Shimmin**

Colin Shimmin of the Wirral Manx Society has kindly been in touch with us with information that adds to our knowledge of the founding of the Society on 28th November 1895 about which we wrote in our December newsletter in a modest celebration of our 125th anniversary. The inaugural meeting had been called by Douglas draper J J Cowin at his son's suggestion but Colin had heard stories that his aunt was involved, possible by holding a preparatory meeting at her home.

Deciding to investigate the story, he found at the Manx Museum's iMuseum newspapers archives an Isle of Man Examiner of 30th March 1923 report on the LMS meeting held on 17th March in which Mr Jack Frowde said, "Jack Cowin, real founder with Miss Ida Shimmin, Deemster Moore and Mr. and Mrs. Hogg" and a Peel City Guardian report on the same gathering that confirmed the original discussions had taken place at her residence.



Ida was Colin's father's half-sister and was born in Peel, the daughter of Philip Shimmin of Stanley Road. She was educated at the Clothworkers' School before becoming a pupil teacher and, after studying at Warrington College in 1884-85, become an assistant mistress at various schools in Eastern England before moving to London with \*School Board posts first at Morning Lane School in Hackney in 1894 then, in 1911, as headmistress at Manor Lane School in Lee, south-east London retiring in 1927.

Having always intended to come home on retirement she bought a plot of land in Peel and, having donated part of it to the city to widen Albany Road at Tynwald Road Corner, had a three bedroom, one bathroom house known as "Cronk Airh," built on the remainder.

She returned to the Island and lived in the house after its completion but, sadly, died there less than two years later. Communication with London seems to have been rather slow and LMS members were informed of Ida's passing only on 19th October when her part in the Society's founding was acknowledged.

The bulk of London Manx early records were destroyed in the London bombing of WW2 so we are most grateful for this additional information about our origins.

**DBH**

\*School Board merged with London County Council in 1904  
Sources: Colin Shimmin and Manx Museum iMuseum newspapers  
Photograph, courtesy of Lillian Greggor

### **Former member backed by Dragons**

Members who watched “Dragons Den” on television on 13th May will have recognised the contestant who persuaded Sara Davies and Touker Suleyman to invest £60,000 in her business. She had started it in April 2019 having been inspired while on Port Erin beach with her two daughters the previous summer and wondering why there was no product that could remove sand from your skin on the shore rather than you bringing it home. More than six months research led to her invention of a talc free product she was to call Beach Powder made from plant and mineral powders and then to opening a business to sell it. Now available in many countries including the USA, Kenya, Switzerland and the United Kingdom as well as the Isle of Man of course, the investment should soon make the product and a second line quickly added: Peach Powder Shimmer familiar sights on many more shop shelves.

Now 47, Stephanie (née Quirk) lived in London before returning to the Island some twenty years ago and was an active member of the Society, a link with her great aunt and former President, Phyllis Long, seeking to recruit younger members and supporting President Terence Brack in proposing one of the toasts at the annual dinner.

On behalf of all who know her, the London Manx newsletter extends its congratulations.

**DBH**

Sources: IOMtoday, Terence Brack

### **Inter-Gaelic Celebration of Saint Columba - Colmcille 1500**

An inter-Gaelic commemoration is now underway marking the birth 1500 years ago of the 6th-century saint Colmcille or Columba. His legacy has contributed to the development of the language, culture and traditions of the Gaelic nations of Ireland (Irish: Éire), Scotland (Scottish Gaelic: Alba) and the Isle of Man (Manx Gaelic: Mannin). He had a significant impact upon the course of Scottish and Irish history. Saint Columba’s legacy continues to be of relevance today. The year-long inter-Gaelic celebration lasts from 7th December 2020 until 7th December 2021. However, it is hoped this celebration of the legacy of

Colmcille is not only confined to his historical contribution, but is an inspiration to future cooperation across all of the Gaelic countries and Gaelic speaking communities around the world. Gaelic was the Celtic language spoken by Columba and his followers. The Goidelic or Gaelic languages of Ireland, Scotland and Isle of Man form one of the two groups of Celtic languages still spoken in the world. The other being the Brittonic languages of Brittany (Breton: Breizh), Cornwall (Cornish: Kernow) and Wales (Welsh: Cymru). Saint Columba also known as Colum Cille, or Chille (Old Irish, meaning 'dove of the church'), Colm Cille (Irish), Calum Cille (Scottish Gaelic), Columb Killey (Manx Gaelic) is thought to have been born on the 7 December 520 or 521AD near Gartan, which was part of Tyrconnell (Irish: Tír Chonaill), now in modern County Donegal, in Ireland. Columba's father was said to be Fedlimid and is recorded as being a descendent of an Irish King, Niall Noígíallachand. His mother Eithne of the Cenel Conailla, was a descendent of Cathair Mór a former King of Leinster. This royal lineage placed Columba in line to the throne of the Uí Néill clan. Much of what is known about Saint Columba's life is recorded in the hagiography *Vita Columbae* "The Life of St Columba". It was written a century after Columba's death by Adomnán of Iona. He was Abbot of Iona from 679 until his death in 704 AD. It is recorded that Columba's early career involved him being trained in poetry and the bardic tradition under a Christian bard named Gemman and he studied at a series of monastic schools most notably under Finnian of Moville and Finnian of Clonard. Columba was ordained as a priest by Bishop Etchen in 551 AD. He is known as one of the 'Twelve Apostles of Ireland' (Irish: Dhá Aspal Déag na hÉireann). These were the twelve early Irish monastic saints of the sixth century who studied under St Finnian. During his early career Columba was involved in the establishment of a number of monastic settlements including most notably in Derry (Irish: Doire) c. 540. Columba/Colmcille is the patron-saint of the city of Derry. It was from Derry, in 563AD that Columba, along with 12 disciples set sail for Dál Riata also known as Dalriada in Scotland. At that time Dál Riata was a Gaelic kingdom that encompassed the western seaboard of Scotland and the north-eastern corner of Ireland. Conall mac Comgaill was king of Dál Riata and a cousin of Columba. It is said he granted the Island of Iona (Scottish Gaelic: Ì Chaluim Chille) to Columba in order for him to settle and found his monastic community. Iona Abbey became an important centre of Gaelic monasticism for three centuries. It was from this base that Columba would spend the rest of his life undertaking missionary activity throughout Scotland, particularly amongst

the Pictish people of Scotland. One interesting story in Adomnán's account of St Columba's life is the first recorded sighting of the famous Loch Ness Monster. It was on 22nd August 565 AD when Columba came across a group of people burying a man by the River Ness during his journey through the lands of the Picts. Columba was told that the man had been attacked by a "water beast" which had dragged him under the water. In this story Columba sent his follower Luigne moccu Min to swim across the river. When the beast came after him, Columba made the sign of the cross and ordered the beast to leave and the monster fled. It is recorded that after his arrival in Scotland he only went back to Ireland once. However, it is thought that his links also helped to negotiate the political relationship between the Uí Néill clan and the Dalriadan kingdom. For the Gaelic warrior kings of Dál Riata, it is not hard to see how Columba was a useful asset. He was a trusted advisor to the King, his monastery provided a high level of education for their sons, and he served as a diplomat to the king's neighbours in the Pictish kingdoms and Ireland. Saint Columba died on Iona on 9th June 597 and this date is celebrated as his Feast Day, which is the annual religious celebration of a day dedicated to a particular saint. It is said that Columba's relics were removed in 849 and divided between Scotland and Ireland. King Kenneth 1, who has been considered to be the founder of the Kingdom of Alba (Scotland), sent them for safekeeping to Dunkeld and Ireland where they were reputedly buried in Downpatrick, County Down, with St. Patrick and St. Brigid. In celebrating the life of Colmcille/Columba there is a recognition of the important legacy of his influence on the shared Gaelic traditions of Scotland, Ireland, the Isle of Man and in other areas of the world where Gaelic people have settled. It is also clear that Columba and his followers had a major influence on religious and spiritual life.

### **Alastair Kneale**

First published in Celtic News

### **Manx Celebrated at Australian Celtic Festival 2021**

The Australian Celtic Festival 2021 was held at Glen Innes in New South Wales on May 1st and 2nd. Each year all of the Celtic Nations are celebrated at the event, but with a special emphasis on certain countries. This year both the Isle of Man and Ireland were the focus. The organisers managed to hold a somewhat scaled down festival this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, having had to cancel last year's event. In spite of this the festival drew the crowds to enjoy the music, markets and celebrations. The special emphasis on the culture and folk tradition of both Ireland and the Isle of Man was reflected in many of the

exhibitions and performances.

The festival was opened by Owen Feeney, Consulate General of Ireland in Sydney. Members of Australian Manx as well as Irish societies were present at the opening ceremony, along with those from the other Nations. A letter of Manx greeting from Alastair Kneale, President of the London Manx Society (Manx:Yn Cheshaght Manninagh Lunnin) was also read out. London Manx has a long standing close relationship with the Festival. Emilie Ryan sang the Irish and Manx National Anthems in Irish and Manx respectively.

### **Alastair Kneale**



Image: Australian Celtic Festival 2021 music and dance

### **Three familiar buildings to stay**

The Manx government announced in mid-April that, after public consultation and consideration of their historic significance, three familiar island buildings will be protected against demolition, alteration or extension by placing them on the Protected Building Register. They are the Cosy Nook, a cafe in Port Erin as well as Trafalgar House in Douglas and the Mitre in Kirk Michael, both public houses. Three views will remain much the same.

### **DBH**

Source: Manx Radio

## **Queen's Pier opens to visitors**

It was a sight not seen for years: scores of visitors taking a Sunday stroll on the pier in Ramsey on 2nd May. It's not yet open to the public, however. These sightseers were some of the 360 who had contributed by buying the timber that forms its decking and other fittings.

The first stage of the project to bring the pier back to its former glory has now been completed and these benefactors were delighted to admire the first finished section. Project manager, Stuart McKenzie is hoping for continued generosity to drive the effort to finish the remaining stretch of the pier.

The Queen's Pier Restoration Trust which signed a five-year lease with the Department of Infrastructure in 2017 to refurbish the first three is planning a grand reopening, if possible in late July. It will then be timed to mark the 135th anniversary of the opening Ramsey's landmark in 1886 and provide the chance for the public to emulate May's visitors.

The 720 yard long pier closed in 1990 and remained mothballed until the summer of 2017 when the lease to restore those first three bays was given and, although the Covid pandemic has caused delays, work was able to continue with a solitary volunteer watched by another to ensure safety. The trust will now focus on phase two which will undertake the restoration of bays four to eight, a task that ought to be much easier as all are identical. However, with sixty bays in total and all the ironwork needing to be replaced, each bay costing around £50,000 to restore, there is a lot of money to be raised.

"It is all down to money", said Stuart. "If the money is there we can order all the steel so it's ready. Without the money, nothing happens".

### **DBH**

Sources: QPRT, Manx Radio, iomtoday

## **Sunshine Record**

May's rain and storms have almost wiped from our memories the dry month that preceded it. In fact, April was not only dry but, in the Isle of Man, the sunniest on record with 264.9 hours of sunshine beating 2007's record by more than thirty hours. Data is recorded at the Meteorological Office at Ronaldsway Airport and it also told us that the average temperature was about one degree below the long term average with an air frost on two nights and a ground frost on seventeen occasions: also a record.

### **DBH**

Source: Manx Radio

### **Not a Covid move**

Should you be on the Island on 31st July / 1st August and remember it's the weekend of the Southern District Agricultural Show, don't go down to Castletown. The show has been in Great Meadow for fifty years but not this year – and it's not down to the pandemic.

As long as lockdown restrictions are lifted, The Southern District Agricultural Show is set to go at the end of July as planned and, in a change to tradition, the show will move to Orrisdale Farm in Ballasalla. The annual event has been at Great Meadow for almost fifty years and the move has been put down to 'modern farming pressures' making the large event difficult to accommodate.

**DBH**

Source Manx Radio

### **Laxey Wheel closed for another year**

Members were informed some months ago that the popular tourist attraction and Laxey land mark had to be closed for the second year in a row after a fault was discovered in a connecting rod last September. The subsequent survey revealed a need for repair to the wheel mechanism as well as to the rods.

The repair work is estimated to cost some £450,000 and we are informed that Manx National Heritage and the Isle of Man treasury have agreed to share the cost. It is hoped that the wheel will be turning again and open to visitors by the start of the 2022 tourist season.

**DBH**

Source: iomtoday

### **Roar silenced one more**

The cancellation of the TT for the second summer running received loads of publicity but bike enthusiasts will also be disappointed that the Southern Hundred has been cancelled again. The upsurge in coronavirus cases in early March led to the reversal of the decision we reported in our spring edition that this race meeting would go ahead in September. Other dates were considered for this year's Southern 100 but the event couldn't guarantee medical cover or that marshals would be available and rescheduling proved impossible. The

Billown meeting was called off early in the month after it was announced border restrictions are expected to remain in place to some extent until the autumn.

The Manx Grand Prix also confirmed it would not be going ahead with 2021 races.

**DBH**

Source; Manx Radio

### **Cav's four**

It was great to see a Manx cyclist hitting the headlines in April. It happened in mid month when Laxey's Mark Cavendish, now 35, won his first stage victory for more than three years following a bout of glandular fever. Competing in the tour of Turkey road race, he then followed it up with two more in succession then went on to win the final stage in a dramatic sprint finish.

He seems to back to his best form.

**DBH**

### **A job for our retirement?**

We understand that Manx National Heritage is looking for a tenant farmer for a 126 acre holding at Cregneash.

Plans are that the organisation will look after the land in the immediate vicinity of the village which is a mixture of permanent pasture, arable land and conservation areas with the surrounding area to be farmed.

Kirsty Neate, head of collections, hopes the appointment will enhance the visitor experience.

**DBH**

Source: Manx Radio

### **New York enjoys Manx Music**

Culture Vannin's March newsletter tells us that Fyn is a new Manx music group based in New York. Its latest EP was inspired by some of the tunes in the #treisht2020 tutorial videos produced by Culture Vannin. The group's whistle player, Shane, hails from the Island, and he joined Heather Cole on fiddle and Mia Theodoratus on harp to record Ben Rein y Voaldyn, I Once Loved A Lady, My Shenn Ayr, Arrane Ghelby, Our Ship Did Sail, Va Nancy ayns Lunnon and Arrane y Chlean.

## **DBH**

### **On the Calf**

It's pleasing to report that resident maintenance staff and wardens have returned to the Calf of Man to monitor bird populations through ringing and counts at its bird observatory. The tiny island has been a bird sanctuary for more than sixty year and Manx National Heritage is responsible for appointing seasonal ornithological and estate wardens every summer.

On the Calf the wardens will be monitoring bird populations with bird ringing and counts. Records tell us that since 1959 over 275,000 birds of 184 species have been ringed and this data set has provided helpful information on pattern of migration and contributed to our understanding of changes in bird populations. They will also monitor seal activities, survey moths and butterflies and record numbers of dragonflies and damselflies.

Those managing the estate are required to ensure the infrastructure is sound including the small hostel that accommodates the limited number of visitors allowed and to repair the dry stone walls where needed. Those visitors are having an interesting time. During the month of May there have been several courses. Two were three-night courses led by Tim Earl, "An Introduction to Bird Watching" which show participants the range of resident and migratory birds as well as demonstrations of bird ringing There was a two day course "Meet the Manxies - an introduction to the Manx Shearwater" that includes the opportunity to accompany the wardens on a night time survey of the Shearwater colonies as well as helping to count the birds and ringed as part of studies into the life of this amazing bird. There was a two night course led by Mike Radcliffe teaching participants how to get the best wildlife photographs. There was a four night course led by David Fisher and Pat Griffiths on dry-stone walling; that gave the opportunity to learn the techniques and gain the skills required for this ancient activity, a course that will be repeated in June and is already "sold out".

Members considering may wish to know that price of residential courses on the Calf include the return boat journey from Port t Mary via the sea-bird colonies at Sugarloaf, self-catering hostel standard accommodation at the island's 1878 farmhouse location of the bird observatory and must be over 18 years of age.

With a great view of the Calf, on 10th June there will be an opportunity to see the solar eclipse providing you leave home early for an 8.30 a.m. breakfast costing £25. Participants will gain spectacular views over a dramatic coastline and a “Dark Skies” view of the phenomenon while provided with a cooked breakfast, explanatory talk, eclipse guidance and safety approved glasses. I noticed that kippers were not on the menu.

## **DBH**

Source: Manx National Heritage

## **Old Island Films arrive at iMuseum**

The archive of old Manx newspapers at the iMuseum offers a fascinating read as well as valuable research material that I often use in preparing our newsletter. We are now able to see on film how our island looked in years gone by – though not as far back as the nineteenth century, of course.

The museum has acquired the films collected by J Walter Royston who was born in 1894, the son of a Douglas Dentist who went on himself to practice as a dentist in Liverpool before retiring to the Island just before the war. Katie Clugston, the MNH Digital Collections assistant told us that it is an exceptionally rare and historically significant visual record of the Isle of Man’s past which they are delighted to make available for audiences around the world. It is to be the first in a series of audio visual materials lunching the museum with 34 films set to be released in three batches: “Sunny Days on the Isle of Man”, now released, to be followed by “Making Ronaldsway. Let’s Fly Away” and “The Isle of Man and the Second World War”.

We shall be able to see scenes of the Island from as far back as the late 1920s through to the 1950s including spectators at the TT, student at the Douglas School of Art, the 1945 visit by the king and queen, the 1947 visit by members of the Rotary Club of Great Britain and Ireland, some public information films and wonderful footage of the Island’s people, buildings, landscape and wild-life. For us, this means that by logging on [www.imuseum.im](http://www.imuseum.im) and clicking on the *Film* button, we can choose a film to watch. It’s something for a long winter evening but I suspect many of us will be watching in June. Do tell us what you thought of what you watched.

**DBH**

Source, Manx National Heritage

## **Celebrating Manx**

A celebration of the Manx language and its sister Gaelic languages planned for June and July 2021. From 9 June to 9 July 2021, the Manx Language Network, Jeebin, will be encouraging everyone to celebrate the Manx language under the umbrella name 'Gaelg21' which simply means 'Manx21'. Jeebin is keen for everyone in both the language and wider community to be involved in hosting and participating in events and projects. If you're interested in becoming involved, we'd love you to get in touch by emailing [gaelg@culturevannin.im](mailto:gaelg@culturevannin.im)

We have tied the celebrations in with an international event called Colmcille1500, which focuses on St Columba and the Gaelic languages in Scotland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Nova Scotia and the Isle of Man. There will be various themes for Colmcille1500 looking at his role as a saint, his relationship to Gaelic languages, his inspiration for heritage, art, as well as environmental issues: <https://colmcille.net/colmcille-1500/>

Manx Language Development Officer for Culture Vannin, Ruth Keggin Gell, said: "We have chosen June and July for Gaelg21 so that we can include Arbory Parish's Laa Columb Killey, St Columba's feast day, and Tynwald Day. We are planning a mix of online and real-life events (in line with any restrictions that may be in place at that time), ensuring that Manx speakers and supporters around the world can take part and can enjoy Gaelg21 to the full."

A schools programme called 'Manx Mysteries' run by the Department of Education, Sport and Culture, has already begun. Twelve of our Island primary schools have been invited to join in an island-wide quest to solve ancient enigmas and collaborate in creating some valuable memories. Jo Callister, Advisory Teacher for the Manx Curriculum in the Department of Education, Sport and Culture said: "A number of generous organisations have offered time and energy, as well as unique gifts and services – including special envelopes with hidden messages, intriguing maps, celebratory anthologies of our language, and mechanical puzzles."

There will be a special focus on traditions and the Manx language, and as the year progresses so will the quest!” The Manx language is one of the Isle of Man’s international success stories. Although relatively small in terms of number of speakers, its impact on worldwide efforts to protect and promote endangered and minority languages is huge. As a result of well-organised community-based initiatives coupled with targeted Isle of Man Government support, the Island is now looked to by many as an example of best practice.

Listen out for news of a song composed by Aalin Clague especially for Colmcille1500 - one of Culture Vannin’s #Treisht2020 projects. A Manannan comic is coming ! The Isle of Man's first ruler, the great Celtic sea god Manannan, is all around us still in the Isle of Man, in place names (Manannan's Chair and others), sayings ("Manannan's Cloak" etc.), in our customs (with our rushes on South Barrule) and in our stories and songs!! But now he is getting his own comic thanks to the ever-brilliant Bethany Grace Illustration.

The 12- page A4 paperback comic will tell of the trials and tribulations of the Manannan, and it will be perfect for young people and those who like beautiful Manx things. Available from 1st April (Covid permitting), this limited first edition of the Isle Of Folklore comic book series open for pre-orders now - get in quick or miss out!

Courtesy of Manx Music Today

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### **“It’s a long way to . . . Larne”**

The article could not be an April Fool joke; it was only mid-February and, being in the Sunday Times, I have to report it to you. Engineers are proposing a tunnel from England to Northern Ireland to unite the UK and the piece quotes engineers a saying, “A tunnel starting north of Liverpool that surfaced in the Isle of Man then went back underground to Belfast would solve the problems.”

The first problem is that the simple route and original proposal to link Stranraer in Scotland with Larne in Northern Ireland by bridge or tunnel would be too far from existing transport connections. The second is that a bridge or tunnel from

good transport links to Belfast would need to be longer that would be wise. The third is Beaufort's Dyke, a natural trench between Scotland and Northern Ireland that contains the largest post-WW2 munitions dump.

There is perhaps a fourth: that the crossing is Boris Johnson's idea so must be investigated and so a proposal has been submitted. It envisages four tunnels under the Irish Sea to a gigantic roundabout nicknamed by some, the "Douglas Roundabout," one from Liverpool and another from Heysham in England, a third from Stranraer in Scotland and a fourth from Larne in Northern Ireland all meeting under the Island.

I have seen coverage of the suggestion in the Manx press, several English newspapers, the Irish News, the New Civil Engineer and Architects' Newspaper and all give the proposal a cool reception. One unnamed commentator said, "Just as Hitler moved around imaginary armies in the dying days of the Third Reich, so the No.10 policy unit is condemned to keep looking at this idea which exists primarily in the mind of the PM."

Nichola Mallon, Northern Ireland's infrastructure minister is reported as insisting, "It's time the prime minister woke up to the reality that people here simply do not want a Boris Bridge, a Boris Burrow, frankly a Boris anything."

I think that's a view with which most who witnessed Mr. Johnson's support for the Garden Bridge over the Thames when he was Mayor of London will understand.

**DBH**

### **Pandemic Update**

Even while our last issue was at the printer, a small flurry of new cases struck the Island. The first was linked to Ballakermeen High School and ten families needed to self-isolate. Then two crew members of Ben-my-Chree tested positive for Covid-19, one an island resident, the other living in the UK both, fortunately, with duties that didn't bring them into contact with passengers. Later the same day a positive test led to contact tracing that found six more cases. Next morning a Douglas health club member tested positive for the virus and while contact tracing got under way, it had to close for the day to carry out a deep clean of its equipment and steam sanitise all contact points. Contact

tracing found four more but all twelve had started with the Steam Packet worker so the authorities were content that there was no resurgence of the pandemic. However, it led to a decision to inoculate crew members of ships and planes conveying passengers between the Island and the UK.

Then after a day without a new case the flurry became a fright. The virus was back with a vengeance and on Tuesday 2nd March, an announcement was made to close schools, restore social distancing rules and a 21 day circuit-breaker restricting movement to begin next day. For a while things looked grave. Year seven students at St Ninian's High School were ordered to self-isolate, the primary school at Ballasalla was closed with everyone in years three and four and all teaching and support staff instructed to self-isolate and, for the first time since mid April last year, the daily tally of new cases reached double figures. By the end of the week this statistic had mounted to 66 with the first death from the virus since early November and the lock-down was extended by a week. Nobles Hospital was under pressure in the middle of the following week with 23 patients being treated for Covid-19, the highest ever, but new cases in the community were beginning to fall.

By the end of March new case numbers were small so on 2nd April a first relaxation of this third lock-down was announced allowing groups of up to ten people to meet outdoors as long as they were socially distanced and followed good hygiene practice. The daily number of new cases dwindled to a trickle and it was announced that on Monday 14th April there would be a partial reopening to allow indoor construction work, hardware shops to reopen, pet groomers to collect and drop off animals (at door), up to ten people to assemble with social distancing and children's play areas to reopen with the reopening of schools a week later.

Things were looking hopeful but on 18th April two new cases were diagnosed, both travel related in people self-isolating and, although this caused no initial concern, the numbers gradually increased despite track and trace efforts working well. A primary school child catching the virus in Ramsey meant a Bunscoill Rhumsaa class and its teacher had to self isolate. Nevertheless, confidence in the safeguarding measures led to the Chief Minister to allow a proposed further relaxation to proceed although he added a prohibition of visits

to hospital and prison and encouraged a continuation of working from home where possible.

The restrictions had the desired effect and after three new cases in the first two days of May there were no more for two weeks when a single person who had been to the UK and was self-isolating tested positive. It looked like an isolated case and good news quickly followed when the only Covid patient in hospital was discharged from intensive care and allowed to go home. Two days later that mid-month case was the only one on the Island.

The improved situation led to a very limited opening of borders from 18th May allowing family members to visit residents living on the Island provided they had not been outside the UK or Channel Island in the previous ten days, take a test costing £30 on arrival and self isolating until the result is received, taking a free second test after six days and avoid health and social care settings for ten days after arriving, unless they need emergency care. Then on the morning we go to press joyful news arrived. Isolation requirements for people travelling to the Isle of Man changed immediately: travel history declarations were reduced and a 'test to release' process implemented. This means that anyone who has been in the UK, Guernsey and Jersey for at least ten days prior to travel is free to leave self-isolation within 48 hours subject to a negative test.

Of course, everyone hopes for a complete reopening of borders and 28th June is the date the government hopes to do be able to do it although it will depend on the situation in the UK.

It's worth noting that the pandemic has been having a large impact on the island's economy with the number of unemployed residents rising by 116 to 938 in March, 88 more than at the same date in 2020. Many employers were also badly affected especially small retailers as well as construction and everyone in the invaluable tourist trade.

Concern was also expressed at an increase of the number of recorded suicides. The figure for 2020 was nearly four times higher than year before. In 2019 inquests returned six suicide verdicts. Last year, it rose sharply to 22.

During Spring the vaccination programme settled into an expanding programme with the government's aim, like that of the United Kingdom, to have inoculated all over 50s by May although two differences in the programme were that when

announcing an increase to twelve weeks between doses it was not to apply to those who had already received an appointment for the second jab and that it would apply only to the Oxford/AstraZenica vaccine. By the end of February, some 21,000 vaccinations had been carried out, exceeding the target of 28,500 with the total reaching 35,000 in mid March by which time the rate had doubled allowing all care home residents to receive their second dose by the end of the month when half of the adult (over 16) population had received at least one jab; some 53,000 in total.

With the arrival of the Moderna vaccine in mid April, the programme continued smoothly and over 30s were being invited to apply for vaccination on the same day as the English started giving priority to over 42s. By the end of April the totals were 56,848 first and 15,777 second doses with priority to be given to follow-up doses during May. As we go to press the figures are 61,186 and 20,470, respectively with 44 appointments made for a first jab and 40,155 for a second. The task is nearly done.

The situation now looks hopeful but, as things deteriorated even as our last newsletter was being printed, let's hope history won't repeat itself and that members will be free to visit the Island in a month's time

### **DBH**

Sources: Isle of Man government web site, iomtoday, Manx Radio

### **Island Quiz**

(Open to non-members through the web site)

1. The Manx "Kys t'ou?" means (a) Can you help? (b) Can you swim? (c) How are you doing, (d) Where is the pub?
2. During the First World War Archibald Knox's occupation was (a) censor, (b) sailor, (c) soldier, (d) teacher?
3. LMS member Vic Quayle has written a book on (a) Ray Amm, (b) Geoff Duke, (c) Stirling Moss, (d) John Surtees?

4. Samantha Barks recorded the songs, (a) A Manx wedding and Two Lovers, (b) Ellan Vannin and the National Anthem, (c) Orry the Dane and Thurrot, (d) Ramsey Town and Fair Maid of Man,
5. Island light-houses date from (a) 1818, (b) 1833, (c) 1868, (d) 1883?

### **Answers to Spring quiz**

1. Moghrey Mie (a) means Good morning.
2. Catherine Callow was one of the first women (d) to vote in a national general election
3. The ship's bell of HMS Manxman is at (a) House of Manannan in Peel.
4. Help was given to the Sutton Hoo dig from (d) Knock-e-Dooney.
5. The Flitter Dance is traditionally performed at (b) Easter (Good Friday)

Closing date 15th July. The first reader to send me five correct answers will receive a Manx £20 note.

Congratulations to Richard Moore from South Africa who was the first to end me five correct answers to our last quiz. He hopes to be able to get to the Island in 2022 and collect his prize from Mylchreests Car Rentals.

### **Acknowledgements**

The editor thanks Terence Brack, Alastair Kneale, Richard Moore, Sally Miller, Colin Shimmin for their kind contribution and also the BBC, 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](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, 18th August.

**DBH**

### **Dates for your diary**

Tynwald Cooish  
225 Chesterton Road, CM4 1AN  
Saturday 3rd July from about 1.00 p.m.  
Phone Sally Miller 01223 502007

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