

NEWSLETTER Winter 2015

Editor – Douglas Barr-Hamilton

Mhelliagh

We made the slightest of alterations to our traditional harvest thanksgiving service, once again held at St Bride's Church in Fleet Street and we were delighted that Canon Robert Teare was able to be with us once again. Sadly, he has since advised us that he is finding increasing pressure on his time following retirement and asks to be excused in the future. He has always made quite a long journey to be with us and Sam has expressed our appreciation to him, something all who have been to the service will endorse.

In addition to Robert's topical sermon, Maisie Sell led our prayers with the Lord's Prayer in Manx and Margaret Brady played the wonderful organ for us, ending the service with a medley of traditional Manx songs.

We decided to try a different pub for our refreshments and booked a private upstairs room with food provided. The Hack and Hop, just around the corner from the Church, welcomed us warmly with an excellent menu although our numbers were rather more than we had anticipated and we only just managed to squeeze everyone in. We managed to hold our usual raffle which went well despite our overlooking of raffle tickets and folk were generous as always and ensured the society met all the costs of the day.

DBH

Excuses

The newsletter editor apologises that this edition is a little later than promised. He had just got under way with getting articles typed and organised when the 13th November atrocities hit Paris. Why should that affect London Manx?

Well, having been a Games Ambassador during the 2012 Olympic Games with duties that sometimes meant helping folk who were not enjoying the festive atmosphere, I was asked to be available for the Billy Graham Rapid Response teams assembled in the case of an emergency, their role being far from the organisation's famous evangelistic image but rather establishing teams that get alongside those suffering after floods, shootings or other catastrophes, working with local Churches. I had not really expected ever to be called but on the morning after the dreadful events in Paris I received an email, "We want an international team of French speakers . . ." I could hardly say, "No," and by Monday lunch time was in Paris with two Americans and four Canadians.

As I know Paris fairly well, I was able to help our other team members get round the city more quickly and it certainly helped international relations that I knew half a dozen of the Parisian volunteers as customers of the bookshop where I work regularly so we were looked upon as partners and not transatlantic experts.

Each day we worked two of the three-a-day three hour shifts we had organised for ourselves together with a long team breakfast meeting at eight each morning so the days were long and emotionally tiring although as we called our efforts, "A ministry of presence," conversations with the members of the public were infrequent but lengthy when required. The experience worked my French hard. Certainly, we received many expressions of appreciation although, looking back on it all, I feel I received much more than I gave.

It was an experience I'm glad I did not opt out of although I'm afraid it delayed this newsletter.

DBH

A Taste of Christmas

A Taste of Christmas, held at St James' Church in Dalby, attracted a capacity audience in the run up to the festive season, with a tried and tested formula providing a sparkling programme of entertainment.

Gathered around the schoolroom fire on a windswept, winter evening, amongst an atmosphere of oil lamps, candlelight and rural decoration, it was the perfect setting for the combined talents of the Manx Gaelic choir Caarjyn Cooijagh, under the direction of Annie Kissack.

Members of the choir sang a selection of unaccompanied carols and Manx carvals, which included a special guest appearance of Charles Guard, who charmed members of the audience with a number of evocative pieces played on the harp.

Other highlights included a poem by Roger McGough set to music by choir member Aalin Clague, which has subsequently been entered for a UK competition, and another poem written and recited by Annie Kissack.

Interspersed amongst the vibrant tunes and thought-provoking poetry, were extracts from the book *The Green Hills by the Sea*, written by Hugh Coleman Davidson and published in 1887.

Supper was provided by their usual onsite team of bakers and cooks, which included Christmas pudding with Brandy Butter and Mince Pies at the close of the evening.

Funds raised on the night will be divided between Dalby Church Restoration Fund, Women's Aid IoM and the Manx overseas charity Mannin Sponsors Africa, who are working to provide wells for villages in Gambia.

Look up their website for details of future events.

www.stjamesdalby.org

Valerie Caine

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Author of the Quatermass Series Remembered at Manx LitFest

Nigel Kneale is remembered locally for being the Island's most successful radio, television and film script writer, and more broadly for writing groundbreaking screenplays for the cult 1950s BBCTV science fiction series, Quatermass.

But his son, Matthew Kneale, (also a published author) was invited to speak at this year's Manx LitFest, when he made two very successful appearances in Douglas and Peel to talk of his own work and that of his father.

The first event was held at the Manx Museum lecture theatre in Douglas, where Matthew Kneale spoke of his father's life and work before introducing a screening of the first episode of The Quatermass Experiment. He was later joined on stage by science writer Brian Clegg, whose new book will focus on the relationship between science and science fiction, for a broader discussion. The evening closed with an episode of Quatermass and the Pit.

On the following day, Matthew Kneale fulfilled a second engagement at the House of Manannan in Peel, where he spoke to a packed audience about his acclaimed book *English Passengers*. His story is set in the mid-nineteenth century on a Manx sailing ship. Captained by Illiam Quilliam Kewley and his crew from Peel, the vessel sails for Tasmania after being chartered by a group of men seeking the Garden of Eden, against the backdrop of the rapid decline of the indigenous population of Tasmanian Aborigines.

Shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2000 and winner of the Whitbread Prize, Matthew Kneale has written six other novels together with a non-fiction publication.

After reading selected passages of the book, the author was happy to answer a series of questions before signing copies of his novel, *English Passengers*, for members of the audience.

Although from a Manx family, Nigel Kneale was born near Barrow, (at that time part of Lancashire but now relocated to Cumbria), where his father had been employed as a journalist, but the family returned to the Isle of Man when he was a small boy.

A talent for writing was self evident in the Kneale household. Nigel's father, William Thomas Kneale, initially worked as a journalist, before joining his brother to run one of the Island's principal newspapers at that time, the *Mona's Herald*.

Nigel initially pursued a career within the legal profession, but upon reflection turned his thoughts towards another vocation; broadcasting live on BBC radio in 1946 reading his own short story with the wistful title *Tomato Cain*.

He later penned a number of short stories, also reflecting aspects of Manx life, which were brought together and published in 1949 under the title of *Tomato Cain and Other Stories*.

By this time, Nigel Kneale had moved to London to study at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), but discovered further success when his book of short stories won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1950. In the same year, Nigel Kneale's first professional radio script (based on the local Snaefell Mine disaster) was broadcast under the title of *The Long Stairs*.

Leaving his acting ambitions behind him, Nigel Kneale concentrated on writing for the emerging television industry, from which came the cult series *The Quatermass Experiment*, along with several commissions and other stories based on the Quatermass idea. Those with a keen eye, or ear, for detail, may notice a number of Manx surnames and place names associated with the Isle of Man, which he incorporated skilfully within his writing.

His work was to influence future drama of this kind, including the long running series *Dr Who*.

Declared Manxman of the Year in 1957, Nigel Kneale's success continued until 1997, although he made only a handful of return visits to the Island.

He died in 2006 at the age of eighty four.

His personal papers were subsequently deposited with Manx National Heritage.

(Photos courtesy of Steve Babb and Manx LitFest)

Valerie Caine

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Life back on the Island

I have just returned from Christmas shopping with my daughter in Strand Street, one of the many bonuses of being back in the Isle of Man. Some folk bemoan the lack of big store shopping but most of the big names are here now - T Max, Iceland, M & S, Peacocks, Smiths, etc., all well presented and brightly decorated. We have a Pound shop which is well stocked, even if you pay £1.20 per item and, of course, the usual choice of charity shops which are very good value throughout the Island and, thank goodness, nobody listened to Mary Portas!

The shops everywhere are not crowded so the whole Christmas shopping experience is less stressful and in spite of many people shopping on line, we found that there was a wide variety of reasonably priced ideas for Christmas presents.

Afterwards we went to a fairly new restaurant in Castle Street called, 'The Tea Junction' where we had a wide choice of tisanes and herbal teas served in individual teapots and three egg timers! Our waitress turned these over as we were served tea with the explanation that we could choose to drink it strong, medium or weak - an unusual touch.

Along with all the different teas we could choose from a mouth watering array of cakes and some brightly coloured (but delicious) macaroons. This seems a good point to mention something I have rediscovered since coming back, that whenever folk get together in the Isle of Man, you can guarantee there will be a slap up spread afterwards. I am talking about bonnag, of course, but also of bun loaf, ginger-bread, sandwiches and cake - all home-made and delicious. How can you resist?

I can't. Hence the weight I lost with the stress of moving has all piled back on. I kid myself that one needs a bit more bulk to keep on the ground when the wind blows in Peel.

Mavis Bell

December 2015

Joining Cliogaree Twaie

Another interesting experience we have enjoyed since returning to the Island is joining a choir that sings everything in the Manx language. Cliogaree Twaie was formed over 25 years ago and has proved quite a challenge for Dave and me as we have always sung with large choral societies - Chorleywood, Tewkesbury, Pershore, Bishops Cleeve and North Herts, to name a few.

In 1980, Alan Pickard formed the Isle of Man Teachers Choir which we sang with for many years, enjoying trips abroad as well as regular concerts in the Villa. How fortunate we have been here to have had the talented Pickard family who, father and son, did so much to promote music on the Island (which continues with his son Tom and his twin sister)

Our next door neighbours in Peel are the Callister family who are all musical and the girls attend the Bunschooil, whilst son Tom is a member of the well-known Manx group, "Barrule." It was a new challenge for us when Kirsten suggested we joined the choir (Cliogaree Twoaie means "Northern Croakers!") and a small group of us share transport to St. Jude's where we have our practices. I was pleased to discover after some weeks that squeezed into the back of the car with us was Val Caine who supplies Douglas with articles for this newsletter. I don't need to remind you that things like this happen all the time in the Isle of Man!

Getting back to the choir, Manx is not an easy language either to learn or listen to (for me anyway) although I am delighted that it is being spoken and sung regularly now. Claire Kilgannon, well known in the music circuit, is our leader, aided by her talented sons John and David who are both good musicians composing, singing and dancing, as well as doing creative warm-ups for the choir. Everyone is patient and good natured with the newcomers but Dave and I struggle with the language even in finding our place amongst 70 songs with Manx titles instead of just turning to the next page in our copy of Verdi's Requiem or the Messiah.

When I ask my long-suffering neighbour, Kate, what we are singing about, it often seems to be some fisherman out in the bay in his boat. But some of the old tunes I recognise, like Mylecharaine, and Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey, and a nice couple who sing with us are from Czechoslovakia and they cope. So we will struggle on.

Watch this space!

Mavis Bell

December 2015

Local Girl Clinches Role in New British Folk Project

Local girl, Cinzia Yates, has recently secured the role of full-time research associate for an innovative project entitled Digital Folk.

It's a two-year AHRC-funded research project which examines the ways in which participants in folk art use digital resources. The project is led by Dr Simon Keegan-Phipps at the University of Sheffield, in collaboration with the University of Westminster and the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

Cinzia graduated last year with a PHD in Ethnomusicology from Cardiff University, with a dissertation entitled *Excavating Notes: The Archaeology of Cannon Formation in Manx Music*.

She was formerly Manx Music Resource Co-ordinator for the Manx Heritage Foundation (now renamed Culture Vannin) and was instrumental in developing the Manx Music Database.

Although the project is concerned with activities in England, Cinzia is keen to ensure that all aspects of folk activity taking place in England are represented; including Cornwall and Manx music and dance.

She's already discovered a dance group called *Lizzie Dripping* based in Sheffield who perform the well-known Manx dance *Eunysagh Vona*.

www.digitalfolk.org

Valerie Caine

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Launch of New Dalby Cookery Book

It may have been twenty five years in the making, but the Island's latest cookery book, *A Slice of Dalby*, has finally come to fruition thanks to parishioners and others involved with fundraising at St James' Church in Dalby.

Sporting a mouth-watering picnic on the front cover, it's pages include recipes for soups, starters, savouries, salads, cakes, desserts and food from the hedgerow; some of which have been used at their popular, annual fundraising functions.

The launch of this zesty publication took place at the village church schoolroom, where visitors were invited to sample the finger food buffet (using recipes included in the book) and hot punch.

As well as a perfect opportunity to purchase a copy of the book, bystanders were encouraged to bid in a silent auction for a large number of original charcoal drawings by Cheryl Cousins. These beautiful, mouth-watering illustrations are found liberally

scattered amongst the book's pages, in-between tasty recipes and brief descriptions of village life.

Money raised from the sale of this book will be put towards the Dalby Church Restoration Fund, but more specifically for the extensive renovation of the church's two basement rooms, which it's hoped will become a not-for-profit village shop and a community space.

Copies of the book will be available from various outlets - see website for details. Alternatively, phone Tracey on (07624) 415091 or email friendsofdalbychurch@gmail.com.

Valerie Caine

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Too secret?

A closely guarded secret during the 2nd World War was the radar installation on the Island's east coast a mile or so north of Bride village. Last month it was in the news when Peter Karran , MHK for Onchan, raised its future in the House of Keys. Two bunkers remain and they are situated on land owned by Island Aggregates and Mr Karran wants them protected from sand and gravel quarrying. Environment Minister, Richard Ronan replied that his department has recently been asked to consider registering the buildings. Currently there is no protection. A 1998 planning consent for sand and gravel extraction merely requires that all Second World War remains lying within the site be recorded and photographed prior to demolition.

Charles Guard of Culture Vannin is reported as fearing it is too late to register the bunkers but, early this month, Island Aggregates' General Manager, Stephen Smyth has said that the bunkers will not be demolished. There is hope that this piece of the Island's history will be preserved, history of international significance.

DBH

Source: iomtoday

Friends of Manx National Heritage Help Fund New Gallery at the House of Manannan

A reception held recently at the House of Manannan in Peel, focused on a generous financial donation by the Friends of Manx National Heritage towards the creation of a

Scandinavian inspired courtyard with a covered walkway, adjoining the new Kingdom of Man Gallery.

Decorated in an organic style, the courtyard is a place to sit and rest awhile whilst enjoying the new gallery, and it was here that the Director of Manx National Heritage, Edmund Southworth, expanded on the creation of this new section in the House of Manannan.

Despite ongoing financial cuts from central government during the preceding five years, Manx National Heritage employed a local architect, builders and crafts people in the creation of the new gallery.

He commented on how visitor numbers for the House of Manannan were doing very well, pointing out how great the response had been from a number of coach companies. Mr Southworth also emphasised how the dynamics of the family group had changed over time, which is reflected in the new gallery.

Using a simple, uncomplicated approach, the gallery has something of an old-style feel with a bright and refreshing appeal, but embraces a sense of fun and inspiration for younger visitors.

Situated next to the celebrated longship Odin's Raven, the new gallery displays a selection of objects excavated on the Isle of Man (some from the west of the Island), including two hundred coins from the Glenfaba and Kilkenny hoards, with brief descriptions to whet your appetite. It tells the story of one of the most significant periods of the Island's history (AD 1000 - 1300), when the Isle of Man was the seat of power for the Kings of Man and the Isles.

Allison Fox (Curator of Archaeology) also spoke more specifically about some of the objects on display.

The House of Manannan is open all year round (except Christmas Day and Boxing Day) 10.00am - 5.00pm. Standard entry charge applies.

Valerie Caine

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November rain and December floods

The Island had experienced one of the wettest months on record so, after another deluge on Thursday 3rd December, it was hit by huge problems in many places.

The most spectacular and concerning involved a school bus, fortunately having discharged its passengers, which toppled into the river below, landing roof down, as the bridge outside the Shore Hotel in Old Laxey partially collapsed. If the rest of it goes, and it's a risk as the attempt is made to recover the bus, telephone communication to much of the village will go too.

Nearby a number of properties on Back Shore Road had to be evacuated because of erosion of the cliff behind. Severe flooding west of the Quarterbridge meant a huge diversion and long delays for traffic heading west from Douglas and in Ramsey an area covering Shopright and Parliament Square was flooded as was the area outside the Colby Glen Hotel in the South. The Mountain Road was closed because of a huge landslide. Then, with gale force winds forecast for Saturday, everyone was advised to stay indoors.

Possible not caused by the weather, is another tragedy; a light aircraft being flown by a Douglas resident from Ronaldsway to Blackpool failed to arrive and the subsequent major search involving lifeboats and helicopters discovered oil in the sea a few miles from the Lancashire coast. At the time of writing we have no further news but Islanders fear the worst.

Chief Minister, Alan Bell thought the flood damage the worst in living memory while thanking the emergency services and all other who helped and adding that, in case it was an indication of climate change and more frequent problems of the same nature, contingency plans would have to be made.

DBH

Manx Christmas

We wish all members a very happy Christmas and a good New Year or in Manx:

Nollick Ghennal as Blein Vie Noa

with some other expressions that may come in useful at this season:

Bannaaghtyn, blessings/greetings

Lesh Yeeareeyn share, with best wishes

Jough y Nollick. Christmas drink

Hee'n oo 'sy vlein noa, see you in the New Year.

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Almoner Service

No call has been made on the Society to visit Island patients in a London hospital for many years and a recent discussion to see if the post should be reinstated revealed a

belief that there is little likelihood of it being needed. If such a call is received in future the Secretary will make a phone request to members within easy reach of the hospital concerned.

However, the situation is very different in Merseyside and Ann Bridson, the Secretary of Wirral Manx tells me that eight of its members offer a weekly visiting service to patients from the Island undergoing treatment in Clatterbridge Oncology Unit. This is usually a welcome opportunity for a chat about Manx connections and events on the Island.

DBH

Island Quiz

(open to non-members through the web site)

1. Thirty Port St Mary residents were killed on 28th December 1852 by
(a) an explosion, (b) a flood, (c) 'flu, (d) a snowstorm?
2. The Manx Electric Railway began service in,
(a) 1895, (b) 1905, (c) 1915, (d) 1925?
3. The number of Manx Archdeacons buried in Andreas churchyard is.
(a) one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four?
4. The deepest shaft in Laxey mine was,
(a) Agneish Shaft, (b) Dumbell's Shaft, (c) North Shaft, (d) Welsh Shaft?
5. The Wirral Manx Society talk on 19th January will be called,
(a) Big Ditch, (b) Island Images, (c) Newfoundland Images, (d) White Star Line?

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

Answers to September's quiz:

1. Sicily uses three legs symbol.
2. Illiam Dhone was shot.
3. George Shuttleworth sailed in Mona's Queen (in No Limit).
4. Manx Aviation and Military Museum is in Ballasalla.
5. Island Games were last held on Island in 2001.

Colin Gill was first with an all correct set of answers to our last quiz and receives £20 in fuel when renting a car from Mylchreest Motors. Our grateful thanks to them.

Acknowledgements

The Editor thanks Mavis Bell, Ann Bridson, Valerie Caine, for their kind contribution and also Culture Vannin and Manx Radio. News about you and articles (of around 450 words) about Island life are welcome and of interest to all. If in doubt, please

contact me, Contributions can be sent at any time for inclusion in the next newsletter, if possible by email (*barrhamilton@btinternet.com*) or 132 Bush Hill, N21 2BS.

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Closing date for the next issue, 15th February, a little earlier than usual so we can give the period of notice of our AGM required by our constitution without additional expense, the meeting being a week earlier than this year.

New Member

We are delighted to welcome a new member, Tom Jackson who found us through the web site and wanted a Manx connection being descended from Castletown Collisters. Tom lives in Spain but hopes to find we have an activity during one of his visits to London when he can meet us. Sam wonders if London is his nearest Manx Society.

DBH

A seasonal Poem

Winter

The winter's day was cold and raw
As 'gainst the wind I had to push.
The hardened snow had yet to thaw
and then - I saw a thrush.
I struggled further down the lane,
Now crisped and ridged with frozen mud.
I gazed at branches I'd thought bare
And found they had begun to bud.

Maisie Sell

Dates for your diary

A.G.M.

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

Annual lunch

Saturday, 7th May 2016 at

Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, Southampton Row.

**NEXT NEWSLETTER DUE IN THREE MONTHS
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