

NEWSLETTER Winter 2021
Editor – Douglas Barr-Hamilton

Mhelliah

London Manx was back at St Bride's for its Mhelliah in October. Uncertainty at the church over changing government guidance meant that its start to arrangements was unduly late but hard work by Sam Weller and the church's Robin Turner (known from of old by members of Manchester Manx) made everything fall into place.

The late notice meant that at least three of its regular congregation were absent including Douglas Wellman on the Island and illness kept at home two who had intended to be present. Nevertheless Douglas and Margarita Barr Hamilton, Voirrey and Robin Carr, Stewart Christian, Wendy Ellis, Pam and Mike Fiddik, Alastair Kneale, Sally and Peter, Miller, Peter Nash, Sam Weller and Jim Kneale Wood were all delighted to meet up.

The small number then worked in the Society's favour as post-lockdown staff shortages had led to its usual lunch venue deciding to close on Mondays and it plumped for the tiny ancient inn, "The Old Bell" adjacent to St Bride's in which there was just enough space. Everyone having ordered in advance, service was slick and chat continued well into the afternoon, just long enough to miss the evening rush hour.

DBH

Society's three new patrons

For the first time that any of the officers can remember, all three presidents; left their office more or less at the same time. The society welcomes as its new presidents:

Sir John Lorimer

Sir John is the Isle of Man's new Lieutenant Governor, the Queen's representative on the Island and was officially sworn in at a special ceremony at Castle Rushen on 29th September. First Deemster Andrew Corlett overseeing the proceedings welcomed him to the Island. His

arrival has been delayed by the decision that Sir Richard Gosney continued until the level of crisis caused by the pandemic had subsided. He will serve for five years and, to continue our tradition, has graciously agreed to be one of London Manx's patrons.



Laurence Skelly

Mr Skelly was educated at Ramsey Grammar School and has had a career in travel and tourism, e-business consultancy, wholesale and event management.

When aged 50 in 2011, he was elected MHK for Rushen. He was re-elected in 2016. After a short spell as Infrastructure Minister in 2014, he was appointed Minister for Economic Development, renamed the Department for Enterprise in 2016. He did not stand for re-

election this year but successfully stood for President of Tynwald so is a member of Legislative Council.



Juan Watterson

Mr Watterson is member of the House of Keys for Rushen, the parish of his childhood, and was first elected in 2006. Following election again in September he was elected by the House to be its speaker. After

graduating in 2001 with first class honours from the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside, he qualified as a chartered accountant. When kindly accepting the position with the Society Mr Watterson told us that his wife, Helena hails from

Hampstead and they make occasional family visits there so we hope we will be able to meet him if our of our events coincides with a visit.



Pictures: iom government

A date for your diary

The Society usually holds its AGM on a Monday in late March and the officers are determined to hold it in 2022 having been unable to arrange one in 2019 or 2020; indeed, it would be improper of them not to. Our usual practice is to combine the meeting with another activity to add value to members' trip to central London and our president has suggested we assemble at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields to attend a lunch time concert which will be followed by the AGM in its Church Hall and an afternoon in National or National Portrait Gallery, Details of concerts are not yet available but if possible we shall meet on 21st March with the 28th an alternative. Formal notice will be given when the February newsletter is published but, as that could be inconveniently short all are asked to keep both dates free if they would like to attend. It would be wonderful if we could be there in number,

DBH

OBITUARY

Clare Crellin

We are very sad to have to let all in the Society know that fellow member Clare Crellin died in Noble's Hospital on 13th November. She was seventy-two years old. A long standing member of the Society, Clare joined as a life member when working in London and maintained both her membership and interest after

retirement to the Island in 2009. A few years ago she needed treatment for cancer and this year she suffered from its return which progressed rapidly. We extend our sympathy to husband, Max Wheeler, thanking him for his kind contribution to this remembrance and send our condolences to all the family.

Twelve years ago they acquired a lovely flat on the sea-front in North Ramsey and made their mark on the town and the larger Island community maintaining a connection with London Manx when Clare sang in the Manx language choir, Cliogaree Twoaie with members, Mavis and Dave Bell, and others of course. She had also fallen in love with Catalonia and was learning its language too. There will be private family funeral for Clare in Ramsey on Tuesday 14th December at 11 a.m., followed by interment at Maughold New Cemetery, where her parents are buried. Family flowers only, please. A public gathering to give thanks for Clare's life will be held in January at a time and place to be announced. Donations in Clare's memory can be made to Hospice Isle of Man. Clare worked for them as a volunteer psychotherapist for seven years, till February 2021.

Emmy for Society members' daughter

As soon as we heard the news the Society sent congratulations through her parents on Hannah Waddingham's award of an Emmy at the Television Academy awards for 2021 in Los Angeles in late September. Mum and dad are, of course, Melodie and Harry who a number of members will have met and remember that Melodie was guest speaker at our annual lunch in April 2013.

The Emmy was awarded for Hannah's wonderful performances in Apple TV's football comedy, "Ted Lasso" about an unqualified American soccer coach's endeavours with the fictitious English Premier League team AFC Richmond, judging her the best supporting actress in a comedy series.

DBH

Margaret Kennaugh

There was a diamond celebration on Saturday, August 28 when supporters of Peel Gardeners' Show gathered at Peel Golf Club to celebrate Margaret Kennaugh's 60 years as show secretary. Margaret is the widow of farmer and local preacher John Kennaugh and lives at Ballaleece, St John's.

Chief Minister, Howard Quayle, whose father Bert is show chairman, was among those who paid tribute to Mrs Kennaugh's remarkable record: "Community is very important to me and it is the quiet people like Margaret who are the backbone of our community", he said.

Mr Quayle senior added,

"It is a marvellous record – she is possibly the longest-serving secretary of any such organisation in the Island. She is the one that runs the show. Without Margaret there would be no show – she leads from the front!"

Among the gifts presented to her were an inscribed clock and an embroidered address.

Sue Woolley

First published in the Independent



From left to right::Chief Minister Howard Quayle, show president Hazel Hannan, patron Dorothy Faragher, long-serving secretary Margaret Kennaugh and chairman Bert Quayle.

New Look Douglas Promenade

I'm told that my first drive down the refurbished Douglas Promenade will be something of a surprise but by the time this newsletter appears it will be familiar to island residents. After years of work and several delays, Manx media reports that the road construction is now complete, the final length of surface having

been laid in the first part of November. The Department of Infrastructure described it as a major milestone marking the end of the refurbishment scheme with all significant traffic management and temporary traffic lights removed and traffic flowing freely.

DBH

Laxey Wheel still motionless

At the end of September local media reported that Manx National Heritage was seeking quotations for the restoration of Laxey Wheel anticipating being able to make an announcement of the start of two stages of work in November. To date I have seen no announcement of the tenders or their acceptance and the wheel, completed in 1854 to pump water from mines using water diverted from Glen Mooar to power the wheel, remains motionless.

It had been hoped to get wheel turning early next year and that the project to restore the Island's most recognised landmark would be under way anticipating that its cost would be around £750,000.

Manx National Heritage was hoping that getting the wheel turning again: the first stage, could be completed by April 2022. That is starting to look unlikely.

DBH

Brampton's new roads bear Society members' names

A 400 house estate has been built recently on the former site of RAF Brampton adjacent to the Cambridgeshire village of the same name and its roads have been named after local individuals who had served the community. Lamb Close and Wigley Drive have been named after Tom Lamb and Maurice and Maureen Wigley all of whom were London Manx Society members. Sadly, only Maureen, still a member, has survived to know about the honour.

DBH

Port St Mary landmark disappearing

Isle of Man newspapers tell us that demolition of the former Bay Queen Hotel in Port St Mary, probably better known to members as the Balqueen Hydro, has restarted. Originally built in the 1920s and run by the Kelly family, the once stand-out feature of the village was closed and partly demolished in 1994. Now the rest is being removed and a planning application submitted earlier this year

envisages the demolition and then redevelopment of the site to include 23 apartments (with balconies), of two, three and four bedroom.

We understand that the footpath and nearby parking will be suspended during the work, possibly until mid March.

DBH

Source: iomtoday

New lifeboat for Peel

The first Shannon class life-boat in service on the Island began operating in late October, over eighteen months after arriving in the port, concentrated training of the crew having been prevented by coronavirus pandemic restrictions. The vessel, which cost some £2.2 million is called, “Frank and Brenda Winter” and, powered by the latest jet propulsion system, can reach 25 knots and is considered safer and more manoeuvrable than the one it replaces.

DBH

Source: Manx Radio 23 Oct

Commonwealth baton visits Island next June

The Queen’s Baton Relay was in the news in early October as it started its journey in Cyprus on its way to all 72 nations and territories of the Commonwealth, covering about 90,000 miles on its way to the start of the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

It will be in the Isle of Man in mid June. The opening ceremony will be on Thursday 28th July.

DBH

Source: Games web site

Smoother Landings

News from the Island is that the runways at Ronaldsway Airport have been strengthened and resurfaced, the project being completed on time and within budget. The short cross runway and the main taxiway parallel with the main runway were also strengthened and resurfaced with the starter strips at each end of the main runway widened too and the runway and taxiway lighting renewed

There were two phases of work. The first began in October 2019 but the start of the second was delayed from March 2020 due to the pandemic. However, work restarted in the Spring of 2021 and finished earlier than anticipated. The total cost was £9 million.

DBH

Source: Manx Radio

War-time Ronaldsway

Peter Bridson of the Wirrall remembers WW2 Castletown where he grew up being full of Royal Naval uniforms and thought members would like clarification of one detail in the article about the airport in our last edition. The airfield did indeed come under Royal Air Force control at the outbreak of hostilities and, known as RAF Ronaldsway, was one of very few where civilian flights continued. However, its operations stopped in 1943 when it was passed to the Admiralty to be developed as a Fleet Air Arm training station.

It was renamed RNAS Ronaldsway but remained out of commission for nearly twelve months while tarmac runways and taxiways were installed as well as facilities to operate three training squadrons using Fairey Barracuda torpedo bombers. It opened during the summer of 1944 as HMS Urley (Manx for eagle) and the three squadrons continued to operate from there until the end of the war. Some extra information provided by committee member, Sally Miller is of interest: while her grandfather's business, J P Kewley, was expanding the original airfield, work was held up in 1937 after a mass grave was found and archaeologists moved in to investigate. They seem to have concluded that it held the remains of soldiers who died during the Battle of Ronaldsway in 1275 when a Scottish army ended the Manx attempt to retain its last Norse King, Godred Magnusson, hanging onto power despite the 1266 Treaty of Perth in which Norway ceded the island to King Alexander III of Scotland.

DBH

Additional material, Forces War Records, Sally Miller

Hunting the Wren

A familiar sight on the Isle of Man on Boxing Day is the custom of Hunting the Wren. Its origins are obscure and a similar custom can be found in parts of Europe notably Spain and southern France, in Scotland, the East of England and, most strongly, on Ireland's Wren Day. Why the wren was chosen instead

of any other bird is unknown but I understand the wren is considered the king of all birds in Manx folklore and in Scotland's Wren Song:

Culture Vannin's web site describes the custom thus: Hunt the Wren is one of the most interesting Manx traditions still practised on the Isle of Man today. On St. Stephen's Day (the 26th of December) communities come together across the Isle of Man to dance and sing around the streets. The practice, dating back to pre-Christian times, is centred on a wren, "The king of all birds," which is hunted and then danced through the streets on a special pole. (In case it needs stating, the bird in the wren pole today is just a replica!)

My research suggests the earliest written record of the custom is from the early eighteenth century when it was remarked as having been practised since time immemorial with the wren reputedly hunted after midnight on 24/25th December as a part of the Christmas festivities. The caught bird was laid on a bier and buried in the local churchyard with 'a kind of whimsical solemnity' that included singing dirges in Manx.

The practice is clearly one that is supposed to bring good luck and some commentators say it was most strongly observed among the fishing community. An 1845 article suggests that date had been used for a century and is the earliest reference to dancing while adding, at the same time, that churchyard burials were no longer practiced and the bird buried on the shore.

Today Hunt the Wren is a popular and unusual Manx tradition when communities form a circle around a representation of a wren on a pole held high with a song, a dance and much merriment. In recent years the custom has been continued in Ballaugh, Douglas, Kirk Michael, Port St Mary, Ramsey, St John's and Sulby and, to avoid bad luck, always finished by mid day.

DBH



Hunt the Wren in Ramsey (Waterloo Road), 1904

Cammag

Another Boxing Day activity on the island is Cammag. Culture Vannin describes it as the traditional sport of the Isle of Man, closely related to hurling or shinty in neighbouring Celtic nations. Records go back hundreds of years showing the sport's domination on the Island until only around a hundred years ago when soccer came to Manx shores. As is traditional, the game continues to be played on St Stephen' Day (26th December) after Hunt the Wren when North and South compete at St John's.

Other sources describe it as having been widespread as an Island sport until about 1900 when it ceased to be played and has only been revived in the past twenty years. As with hurling and shinty, players use a form of stick to play a ball and teams can comprise as few as four or as many as two hundred players. The game probably gets its name from the shape of the stick, the gaelic root word *cam* meaning bent, although sticks could be of any size and shape and were frequently made from gorse.

Manx Radio described last year's game thus:

Reports South 'greatly outnumbered'

The North was victorious over the South in the annual Cammag match this week. The traditional team sport has recently been held each year at St John's on St Stephen's Day, pitting the opposite ends of the Island against each other.

Players use a cammag stick to whack a ball between staked goals This time, the North beat their southern rivals 4-2 in the game which was held in cold conditions.

It was remarked that this year the South was greatly outnumbered and some have suggested an alternative score-line to the one reported. Promoter Culture Vannin has issued a call to arms - for citizens to get themselves ready. It takes place after you've been to Hunt the Wren in the morning. You're encouraged to "find yourself a good stick from a hedgerow somewhere, and make sure you're at St. John's for 2pm."

Held on the Tynwald Fair field, the sport is somewhat close to hockey, with the full rule set available on Wikipedia.

DBH

New South Wales defies Covid restrictions

The Australian Celtic Festival invited you to say "Moghrey mie," as you go down under. For one weekend, children living 'down under' could visit the fairy bridge, climb Tynwald Hill and hunt the wren. The Isle of Man was one of the 'host' nations at the Australian Celtic fringe festival, held last weekend in New South Wales.

Along with the fellow host nation, Ireland, the festival featured events, music and activities from the island. These included a life-size recreation of the Fairy Bridge with all the help needed for children to learn how to say 'hello' to the little people in Manx as they crossed, a craft marquee for children to learn more about Manx folklore and a chance to have a go at the traditional hunt the wren dance. The Three Legs of Man flag was paraded by representatives of the Queensland Manx society and a speech of Manx greeting from Alastair Kneale, President of Yn Cheshaght Manninagh Lunnin, the London Manx Society, who was prevented from travelling to the festival because of Covid restrictions, was also read out.

Organiser Rhonda Bombell said that the Isle of Man was very well represented throughout the two day event. "We had an Isle of Man flag raising ceremony on our own Tynwald Hill," said Rhonda. "Our visitor information centre imported items from the Isle of Man to sell in the festival marquee and this was very well

received. We used Manx words around the area to educate the children and had a storytelling dedicated to Manx Fairytales, 'The Moddey Doo of Peel Castle.' 'How the Manx Cat lost her Tail', 'How the Wren became the King of the Birds' and folk tale, 'The Lazy Wife.' Also, the local men's shed collective made a Fairy Bridge that the children had to walk over, replicating the original Isle of Man Fairy Bridge sign which guided the children to say hello to the fairies or little people or "Moghrey mie mooinjer veggey."

We had excellent numbers and the positive feedback keeps flowing in but the festival was a smaller affair than usual."

Alwyn Piggot

Report for Manx Society of New South Wales

New book on Castletown

Did you know that "Shickrys" is Castletown's motto?

Sara Goodwins has recently informed us that the third in the series of books on the Island's towns was published a few weeks ago and it includes this information and an explanation. We learn that the word is pronounced (roughly) 'shigurus' and means 'sure' or 'certain'.

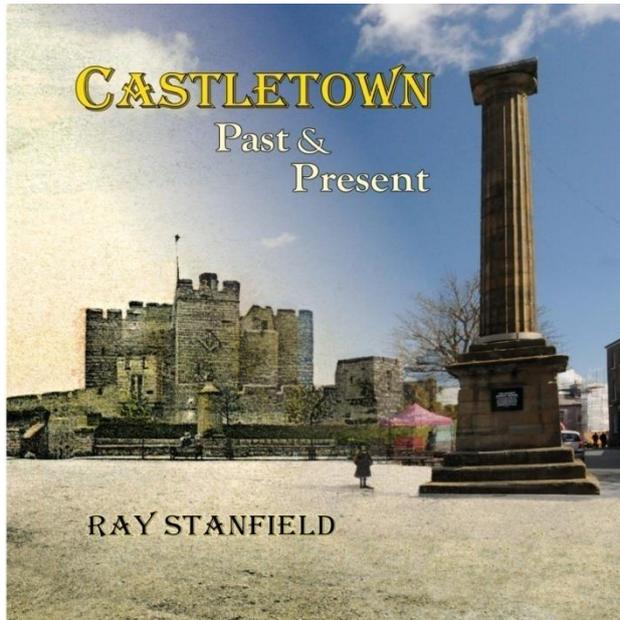
"Castletown: past & present" has joined Peel and Port Erin in the publishers' occasional series matching old postcard views with modern photographs. Each is 128 pages long, two thirds A4 and costs £13.95.

Sara told us that she always felt doing a book like this hugely rewarding, not least because they find out all sorts of things they didn't know about the town in question. For example, a Castletown banker, George Quayle was also a smuggler, speaker of the House of Keys and skilled model maker. More sadly, forty men from Queen Street, a road of only 39 houses, volunteered to fight in the First World War, six of whom were killed. Such stories abound and many of them have been included in the book.

To order for Christmas – or any other time – www.loaghtanbooks.com.

DBH

Source: Loaghtan Books



Pandemic Update

As we distributed our Autumn newsletter new case numbers were drifting downward unlike on the mainland and the trend continued into September. By the 5th it was as low as 16 of the 261 active cases of which ten were in hospital, none in intensive care. A day later and a little before England, Manx Public Health decided to roll out additional primary vaccination doses to Manx residents with severely weakened immune systems with a third for those who are or were immune-suppressed when offered their first or second.

Unlike the increasing infection rates in all four UK countries, early September figures were relatively stable and from mid month declined slightly although, sadly, there was one more death from the virus on 16th. The time of decline was brief and a slight increase in the number of new cases and hospital admissions began and there was another death on the last day of September.

As in England, the daily number of new cases increased gradually during the first week in October, mainly in the 10-14 age bracket and two further deaths from the virus were confirmed. During the following week the number of cases rose even further from 404 to 525 with new cases rising from 60 per day to 77 per day. The number of people in Noble's Hospital with the virus went from two to eight but two were discharged two days later.

There was an impact on new-case numbers, increasing by 10% the following week, several fans contracting Covid-19 after attending a music festival on 9th and briefly the Island had more cases of the virus than anywhere else in the British Isles. The incident led to the postponement until next year of a similar event scheduled for 29th October. As one day's new cases exceeded the 100 mark, the Director of Public Health, Dr. Henrietta Ewart urged residents to wear a face covering and to keep their distance in crowded places. The following week, although there were three more admissions into Noble's, none needing intensive care, cases continued to fall the following week of half term. Sadly, there had been seven more deaths from the disease during the month.

November began with eleven Covid-19 patients in Noble's Hospital but the number fell to eight during the first week of the month and to five in the second, a fortnight in which the number of new daily cases nearly halved but there were two more deaths bringing the number of fatalities from the virus since the start of the pandemic to 66. Statistics were fairly flat mid month but have been creeping up in the week in which we go to print.

DBH

Source: Manx government web site

December Island Quiz

(Open to non-members through the web site)

1. We can dip our toes in the sea on Fenella Beach in
(a) Douglas, (b) Peel, (c) Port Erin, (d) Ramsey?
2. The parish church that lost half its tower during World War II is
(a) Andreas, (b) Jurby, (c) Patrick, (d) Rushen?
3. The physical educationalist whose methods were inspired by Manx cats was
(a) Aggerholm, (b) Gallahue, (c) Pilates, (d) Sarradel?
4. The Snaefell Mine disaster took place in
(a) 1894, (b) 1895, (c) 1896, (d) 1897?
5. Tommy Big Eyes' surname was
(a) Callister, (b) Gelling, (c) Lace, (d) Quilliam?

September quiz Answers

1. The Manx, "Slane lhiat" means (a) goodbye,
2. The most northerly was (d) Glen Tramman?
3. The English government first set up a regular sailing between Whitehaven and Douglas in (b) 1767,
4. According to the song, who might take me to the Isle of Man again was (c) Flanagan,
5. In May Stephanie Quirk teamed up with two dragons to produce (c) a powder

Congratulations to Richard Moore of South Africa who was once again the first with a set of five correct answers. A Manx £20 note is being kept for him to spend on his next visit to the Island.

The closing date for the current quiz is 15th January.

The first reader to send me five correct answers will receive a Manx £20 note.

Acknowledgements

The editor thanks Dave Bell, Peter Bridson, Sara Goodwins, Alastair Kneale, Sally Miller, Alwyn Piggot, Man Wheeler, Maureen Wigley, Sue Woolley, and also Isle of Man newspapers, Manx Radio, Manx Music Today, Culture Vannin and Manx National Heritage for their kind contribution. 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 February.

DBH

Christmas Wishes

Nollick Ghennal erriu, as blein feer vie Seihll as slaynt da'n slane lught-thie;
Bea as gennallys eu bio ry-cheilley, Shee as graih eddyr mraane as deiney.

Merry Christmas to you and a very good year Long life and health to the whole household; Life and joy to you living together, Peace and love between women and men.

Dates for your diary

AGM

To be arranged

Please see article on page 3

NEXT NEWSLETTER DUE IN THREE MONTHS

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LONDON MANX SOCIETY