



Queensland Manx Society

Serving the Manx Community since 1914

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2021

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If we are lucky, we will be free of many restrictions by December this year. Vaccination numbers are increasing to the point where the government will lift practically all restrictions. However, interstate movement keeps bringing up new cases that threaten the safety of other citizens. Bit by bit the State Government will work out ways to overcome these problems. We can only hope that vaccinations will reach the desired levels and everyone can get back to normal again (but what's normal now).

In the short term we are planning for outdoor events until the Christmas Party in December. Our next event is the family picnic at Bribie Island on the 31st. October. The theme of the event is "Hop Tu Naa" so put on your thinking caps and come out with costumes or decorations to match the occasion. We will have our tent up to advertise our presence and we will hand out a few flags to the kids in the area. Let us show the locals about ourselves and see if can get a couple new members to come forward and introduce themselves. It's all about spreading the word and getting new members and having fun at the same time.

It is sad to mention that we have lost two long standing members this year over a few months. John Downie passed away in February and unfortunately Christina Downie passed away on 13th. September from a stroke. It is a sad loss to the Society and they will be missed at our meetings and at Glen Innes.

On the 26th. September, we had the opportunity to address the Ipswich Historical Society at Coonea Estate, New Chum, and speak about the Qld Manx Society, some family histories, and the Isle of Man. It was a fruitful h occasion and we hope to join them in other events in the future. They have a wonderful setup at the centre because it brings together many organisations in the district under one location. We had ten members there to join in with the IHS members and enjoy the day.

Received a note the other day:

Thank you for your latest newsletter, which was interesting as always. You may recall that I met you at the Boondooma Homestead in August 2019, when you had your tent at the "Scots

in the Bush" event and I was with a group from Newstead House in Brisbane. At the time I told you that the family story was that our grandmother was a Manx woman. I had only her name, Sarah Sansbury.

Since then, one of my sons has taken a test to find out his heritage. (That was a gift from his wife, which I thought was a very unusual gift). Well, among all the English from the Midlands and north was the fact that he had Manx heritage as well. This last was a surprise to him. However, I was able to tell him about Sarah Sansbury and how you had consulted your list of Manx surnames. Sansbury was on the list. I thought the connection was somewhat tenuous and was hesitant to mention it, but I am glad I did and you were very kind.

Thank you very much for confirming that the name was from the Isle of Man. Now I know that the old family story has a basis in genetic fact. This grandmother was married to Edward Crooke and they migrated to Australia in about 1907. She lived in Sydney and we saw her only rarely, as she died in about 1945. I was only 10 then so have little memory of her.

Kind regards,

Diana Osbaldiston

This is a common story, or could be so, if we could make contact with other families. Manx names are not always known to a family and when can show them that someone in their family has Manx heritage, we might be able to attract their interest in being a member. When you look at the broad spectrum of members of our own ancestors, whether they are family names or maiden names, it sometimes shows up as Manx. Most people reject this linkage because they associate with certain members of the family that they know are English, Irish or Scottish. However, if they have not done a thorough search of their family tree, they miss this connection to the Isle of Man. This is something we must work on at public events to attract people's attention.

HAVE FUN WITH GENEALOGY!

Want something fun to do during your time at home? These are some enjoyable activities you can do with your account on Family Search. If you didn't already do this, go to www.familysearch.org and sign up. Add in your family history information to Family Tree. Go back as far as you can, adding in photos and memories and such as you go. These will be the basis for the activities you do. Once you have at least some of your information in place, you are ready to have some fun. At the top of the home page of Family Search, there is a tab for "activities." Click on that tab and select "all activities." This will take you to a screen with a myriad of choices. Try one or try them all. For example, try, "Where Am I From." Using the information, you have entered, it will take you to a world map and show numbers of ancestors who have been born in areas of the world. As you click and move in on the map, it breaks down into more specific places. My map shows 161 in Western Europe. When I zoom in a bit, I see 56 in the United Kingdom area. Zoom in more and there are 47 on the Isle of Man. A little more, and I see 8 in Peel, 11 in Kirk Michael, 11 in Ballaugh, etc. Another fun one is

called "All About Me." This will take you to a page that is based on your name and year of birth. Want to know how much a gallon of gas cost the year you were born or who won the World Series that year? A caveat is that this site is created by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and some of the info reflects their own culture. Just skip the items that don't have meaning for you. One of my favourites is called "Compare-a-Face." You need to take a picture of yourself and then it will compare how much you look like your ancestors. It uses computerized points of facial recognition and will analyse what percentage of your features are like a particular progenitor. It doesn't add all together to make 100%, but rather tells you how much your face looks like this ancestor and how much like another. The percentages are only between you and one grandmother/father at a time. It can only use the photos you have put in your tree, so be sure to have many added. It's also fun to put yourself into your ancestral photos and see what you might have looked like "back then." 2 3. Again, this one requires pictures in the system. This is called "Picture my Heritage." You will see what you might have looked like in your great-grandmother's wedding gown! The "Ancestor Challenge" is a fun game that will get some kids memorizing their ancestors' data so they can beat their siblings. Be sure to check out "In-home Activities." This will give you ideas at home to do such as journaling, finding your talents, knowing your own story, etc. It's a good place for ideas and a jumping off point for you to come up with your own ideas. Now, I'm going to give you two more places to have fun, but I won't go into them too much right now. Just explore on your own. Check out The Family History Guide <https://www.thefhguide.com/>. This is a free genealogy site that can guide you step-by-step through doing almost any family history research and using various websites like Ancestry, Find My Past, etc. But they also have a ton of ideas for family activities. Check them out. Another place to go is <https://fhtl.byu.edu/> (BYU Family History Technology Lab). They have games to play! There data also comes from what you have entered into Family Tree on Family Search. You really have to play Geneopardy and Wheel of Family Fortune with your family members! And don't miss Relative Finder to see how you might be related to famous people. Have fun with family history while you're staying home!

Lucy Q. Peterson, lucyqp@msn.com

Courtesy of NAMA Newsletter

BEGGAN GAELG: THE FARMER

Farming has always been a big business on the Isle of Man, with about 75 percent of the island or 107,210 acres today used for agricultural purposes, both crops and grazing, according to the Manx government. Some Manx families have farmed the same land for centuries, and the Manx word for a town, balley, also means farm or homestead and appears in many farm names. That's true in Irish and Scottish Gaelic as well (the word in both is spelled "baile"), but when it comes to the words for farmer and farming, the Manx part ways with their Gaelic cousins and use a distinct and interesting word. A farmer is an eirinagh in Manx. That's not the same as a Yernagh, or Irish person, though the "eirín" at the start of the word might mislead you. Instead, eirinagh, along with eirinys, which means farming or

husbandry, derives from a special term used in medieval Gaelic in Ireland, airchinneach, denoting a person responsible for the maintenance of church lands. Historians anglicize airchinneach as "erenagh" when discussing agriculture and land ownership in medieval Ireland (the parts controlled by the Gaelic Irish). These "erenaghs" originally were the heads of ecclesiastical communities, and would have been responsible for the lands of their monasterium. By the later Middle Ages, however, the erenaghs had become the chief tenants of church lands, as Henry A. Jeffries describes in his paper "Erenaghs in Pre-Plantation Ulster," published by the Catholic Historical Society of Ireland. As with most things in Gaelic society, the role of erenagh was hereditary, passed down through centuries in some family lineages. Mac an Airchinnigh (MacEnerny) is an Irish surname. It's interesting that this word has survived as "eirinagh" in Manx, although it dropped by the wayside long ago in Ireland and Scotland, where feirmeóir and tuathanach are used, respectively. Does the survival of the term eirinagh point to actual Manx "erenaghs" in the Middle Ages? I don't know of any record of such, and they would likely predate the arrival of the Stanley's in the early 1400s. Perhaps the term was borrowed from the Irish, or used for those who farmed church lands and that original sense of the word was lost and reduced to "farmer." If anyone can throw more light on the origins of this Manx word, please let us know.

-- Illiam Cassidy MANX QUI

Courtesy of NAMA Newsletter

Bi-Centenary of Calf of Man Lighthouses

There's a trio of lighthouses situated on the Calf of Man which have long since served their useful purpose, and now lie forlorn and abandoned amongst the rugged terrain, but this year two of them celebrate a remarkable bi-centenary. Their story revolves around dispute, uncertainty and the lives of innumerable mariners whose safe passage became the focal point of their development.

Although lighthouses appeared around the coasts of England, Ireland and Scotland, the Isle of Man remained an unlit corner for those risking their lives at sea. Initially pleas for illumination fell upon deaf ears, but as more ships succumbed to the treacherous, semi-submerged reef (known as the Chickens' Rock) which future lighthouses would mark, further pressure was administered. This resulted in a visit in 1802 by the celebrated Scottish civil engineer Robert Stevenson, designer of lighthouses and grandfather of the famous author Robert Louis Stevenson.

There were, however, a number of problems to resolve - namely which authority would build the lights, how would they be powered, where they would be positioned and who was to pay for their construction. The Isle of Man was deemed a separate jurisdiction, but eventually the Isle of Man Lighthouse Bill was passed in 1815, which forced the Duke of Atholl to lease land to the Northern Lights Authority. The estimated cost of building the three lighthouses required (two on the Calf of Man and one at the Point of Ayre) was in excess of £10,000, but funds were difficult to acquire. Debate continued between Stevenson and other parties as to

the position of the lighthouses and other important aspects of the scheme. One of the staff from Northern Lights also remained on the Calf of Man for approximately six months purely to record daily levels of fog, providing important information for citing of the lighthouses which needed to be lined up exactly with the one on Chickens' Rock, and do preparatory work at the harbour. Contractors, an agent, a senior mason and others were appointed on the Island and some of the building materials were also locally sourced. Stevenson drew up detailed instructions for the contractors, which included remarkable attention to exterior detail, such as the inclusion of iron-work dolphins around the light room and the Three Legs of Man symbol within the iron work.

However, a thorn in the side of Stevenson was the Duke of Atholl's tenant on the Calf of Man. John Gourlay, who lived with his wife, was a warrener, but remained determined that the lighthouses should not be built and anything connected with them stopped. Their relationship continued to deteriorate, with Stevenson exclaiming that it was necessary to have as little communication with 'that Dutchman' as possible. His claims and demands got seriously out of hand, resulting in significant delays, but Stevenson persevered.

Problems, however, continued to plague the project. The lighthouse keepers were compelled to live in unfinished lighthouses whilst their families moved into lodgings in Port St Mary. Later tragedy struck on the Calf of Man when deadly typhus fever decimated the families who had now joined their men folk. Four children and a servant of the aforementioned John Gourlay died, but fear of this highly contagious disease made it difficult to persuade a boat crew to take a doctor and nurse to the Island.

The two lighthouses were used for fifty-six years in total, with a third, contemporary model operating for just thirty-nine years. Regrettably the buildings are now in a bad state of repair, not least because of unconcealed vandalism, which included the removal of exquisite woodwork (in place since 1818) which was sold as firewood.

All three lighthouses on the Calf of Man were ultimately decommissioned and abandoned, and nowadays the unmanned, automatic lighthouse on Chickens' Rock is the sole marker of the treacherous reef which left so many mariners in fear of their lives.

Valerie Caine

© November 2019 (Courtesy of Manx Life)

And Courtesy of the London Manx Society Newsletter

World heritage timepieces to chime on the Isle of Man

Some of history's most significant British timepieces dating from 1500 to 1800 have gone on display on the Isle of Man in a new Luxury of Time exhibition, made possible thanks to the generosity of the philanthropist Dr John C Taylor OBE. The stunning spectacle showing the golden age of clock and watch making can be seen at the Manx Museum in Douglas from Saturday 15th February until Sunday 10th May 2020.

Born in Buxton, Derbyshire in 1936 and educated at King William's College, Dr Taylor returned to the Island in 1977 to bring up his young family. He founded Strix in 1981, made numerous world-changing inventions including kettle controls now used a billion times a day. He retired and left the company in 1999. He has over 400 patents to his name and has since focussed on philanthropy and passing on his knowledge to future generations through talks, lectures and endowments. He has also built a stunning home in Santon: Arragon Mooar House which is elliptical in shape because, in his own words, "Building a circular one would have been too easy".

Dr Taylor continued, "I've always loved clocks and my interest started at a young age when I would watch my father, who was an engineer and inventor. He would boil clock mechanisms in a pan to release built-up grease and then scrub and clean the metal until he breathed new life into the gear wheels and got them working again." Dr Taylor has since built up a unique collection of early clocks and watches from the British Isles that tell many stories of great design, metal work, furniture making, entrepreneurialism, engineering and timekeeping.

"Hand-made English clocks, many dated and numbered, were in fact the first mass-produced luxury items, heralding the start of the industrial revolution. Not only is the craftsmanship astoundingly intricate, it amazes me that such wonderful works of art could be created to such a high specification when spectacles were rare and clockmakers had to make their own tools."

The exhibition will feature 30 different outstandingly beautiful timepieces, including a gothic lantern clock, made by blacksmiths (from 1500) plus majestic clocks and exquisite watches. The collection has many Royal connections. The silver and gilt David Ramsay astronomical verge watch (c1618) puts modern "complicated" watches in their place. The dial of this watch shows the hour, the day (sign, name and deity), the month (name and date) together with the sign of the Zodiac, the age and phase of the moon, and the planet hour. This incredible timepiece bears an engraving of a portrait of King James I and is signed, 'David Ramsay Scottes me Fecit'. There is also the bedside table clock, Queen Mary's Turtle-shell Tompion (c1693) styled from the design of Daniel Marot and Louis XIV's court in Versailles. Tompion billed Queen Mary II £40.00 for this clock on an itemised account dated 16th August 1693.

The Joseph Knibb ebony veneered table clock with tic-tac escapement (1677) also has an impressive pedigree. It was part of King George III's collection and was presented to his surgeon, Thomas Beckett. It then remained in the Beckett family until it was sold to the collection of the renowned Isle of Man watchmaker, George Daniels.

Taking pride of place in the exhibition is the John Harrison of Barrow Longcase Clock (1726), made famous through global interest in the Longitude Prize. This magnificent timepiece was originally created as a land-based clock against which to calibrate his sea clocks. Following Harrison's addition of his gridiron pendulum, this became the most accurate clock in the world for 150 years.

Kirsty Neate, Head of Professional Services for Manx National Heritage said,

"The exhibition would not have been possible without the support and collaboration of Isle of Man resident, inventor and philanthropist, Dr Taylor, and his team, to whom Manx National Heritage are extremely grateful for their generosity in bringing this unique collection together for display on the Isle of Man for the first time".

[Dr Taylor](#) added, "Most people state that the world's greatest invention is the wheel. The wheel is the servant of mankind, but mankind is slave to the clock so therefore, surely, clocks are the most important objects ever invented."

The *Luxury of Time* exhibition runs at the [Manx Museum](#), Kingswood Grove, Douglas, Isle of Man IM1 3LY, from Saturday 15th February 2020 to Sunday 10th May 2020. It is open daily from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM admission free.

Following the launch of the exhibition, Dr. Taylor will deliver a public lecture on 5 March 2020 at the Manx Museum, with all proceeds to Manx National Heritage, Isle of Man registered charity no. 603. Tickets are priced at £10. Dr Taylor will also be leading an exclusive guided tour of the gallery on 9th April.

Douglas Barr-Hamilton

Source: Manx National Heritage
Courtesy of London Manx Society Newsletter

Manx Spinners

Images of lone Manx spinners, sitting at spinning wheels at the doors of thatched cottages. They are evocative of times gone by, but not really so long ago. Failing eyes getting out of the smoky, indoor darkness to obtain the benefit of daylight. What the eyes can no longer focus on, compensated for by years of experience in the craft and knowledge of the machine. The spinning wheel, so important in the Celtic home in years gone by. For hundreds of years spinning held a central place in the lives of the croft and the spinning wheel was a proud possession. The Manx Museum (Manx: Thie Tashtee Vannin) has a collection of these images. Faded black and white photographs of, usually older, women with a look of pride as they undertook their work. Thanks go to Manx National Heritage (Eiraght Ashoonagh Vannin) for the pictures.

Fibres have played a crucial part in human life from prehistory and the skill to spin thread and weave into cloth has developed over many centuries. The Irish Guild of Weavers, Spinners, and Dyers have a history section on their website and write:

'The earliest known evidence in Ireland of woven material dates from about 1600 B.C., as pottery from that period shows signs of woven material in which

the clay was placed before firing. A fragment of cloth in the National Museum, found in a bog in County Antrim, is dated from at least 700 B.C.

Stone spinning whorls have been recovered from many excavations such as crannogs or lake dwellings of the first and second centuries B.C., although we know that spinning was certainly practised in Ireland in Neolithic times. Fragments of woven fabric and weaving tools have been found in the excavations of Viking and Medieval Dublin.'

It was not easy work with wool having to be cleaned when sheared from the sheep, carded in order to separate the fibres and spun into yarn. The weaving often then being undertaken at home to supply own, family or neighbours' needs, but also the yarn being supplied to the weaver to gain income and be made into cloth for various items that were sold. However, as technology changed and the level of demand grew the supply coming from the domestic



spinners and weavers was simply not enough.

Although a number of other political and social factors also added to the

decline in the domestic spinner. There were regional variations, with remote areas holding longer to the tradition and there are also those who continue to work in this small-scale way today. Nevertheless, the numbers fell, leaving just the image, for some reason a very powerful and wistful one, of the lone spinner at the door of the Manx thatched cottage. Remembered not only from museum archives but in folklore and song, with spinning wheels an object commonly associated with Manx fairy tales.

Alastair Kneale

Courtesy London Manx Society Newsletter

Manx Sayings

Ta ynsagh coamrey stoamey yn dooinney berchagh; as t'eh berchys yn dooinney boght.
Learning is the fine clothes of the rich man, and is the riches of the poor man.



Manannan's Choice of the Year awarded to Stephen Miller

In 2020 Stephen Miller was awarded the Reih Bleeaney Vanannan (Manannan's Choice of the Year) at Culture Vannin in St John's recently, in recognition of his passionate research into Manx folklore, music, dance and its collection. As well as a dedicated researcher, Stephen also seeks out the important figures and collectors involved with the Celtic revival. His persistence, energy and expertise during a period of forty years, has resulted in an impressive body of work - which he shares freely and generously in both print and online.

An early adopter of technology, Stephen's work is available for anyone through his website now in its twenty fifth year (Chiollagh Books), the Manx Music and Dance Newsletter (Kiaull Manninagh Jiu - subscribe through the manxmusic.com website), the Ballaugh Heritage Newsletter, as well as numerous personal publications and lectures.

Director of Culture Vannin, Dr Breesha Maddrell commented, "He remains someone determined to tease remarkable stories relating to Manx cultural and social history out of the archives in order to bring life to some of the key characters who have shaped our Island; to understand what their focus was in terms of collecting, recording, or promoting Manx culture - and to share his findings with other researchers."

His interest in Manx folklore encouraged Stephen to subscribe and reprint important work, such as William Cashen's Folk-Lore and the Manx Folklore and Superstitions by John Rhys. An extensive list of transcriptions and historical detective work has allowed us a better understanding of several Manx antiquarians and the cultural revival. Stephen was presented with a medal, certificate and a cheque, naming Mooinjer Veggey (the Manx Gaelic playgroup) as his chosen Manx cultural cause for the additional donation. Although now based off the Island, Stephen remains a frequent visitor and can usually be found amongst the national archives held by Manx National Heritage.

Valerie Caine

© February 2020 (Courtesy of the North Western Chronicle)

Sophia Morrison, Mona Douglas and Their Enchanted Isle

Local author, Derek Winterbottom, has written several books concerning different aspects of the Isle of Man, but he has now focused his attention towards two remarkable women who devoted their lives to an all-consuming passion. Both Sophia Morrison and Mona Douglas undoubtedly played a crucial role in the survival and continuity of the Island's language, folklore and other traditional elements of Manx life; but here we have a book which brings them together in printed form and explores their lives on an intimate basis. Although their backgrounds couldn't have been more different, both women sought the same goal, in an attempt to save and nourish what they held dear to their hearts, and within these pages you'll find out more about their tremendous accomplishments and determination. And yet in some respects their upbringing reflected each other's. Notwithstanding their unbridled love of Manxness, both women experienced an unusual childhood, spent time in a rural setting and were the daughters of businessmen. As recounted in this book, neither of their lives were without colour and boldness, but both of them experienced sadness and frustration in equal measure.

Other notable characters who have played their part in Manx history make a brief appearance as important cornerstones to both women's stories, which develop on either side of the Island. This book offers a glimpse into their daily lives and lifts the curtain occasionally on private moments, but also teases out other elements which defined them. It shadows the growing work of both women and their determination to be successful in a somewhat patriarchal world.

Sophia Morrison was very much a facilitator, and although largely remembered for her iconic book *Manx Fairy Tales*, worked upon other, diverse publications which also deserve recognition. Unfortunately, ill health dogged her later years and with her early death we can only surmise what her greater achievements may have been.

A large section of the book is, however, devoted to Mona Douglas, to whom Sophia passed the baton as cultural field-worker and was, indeed, encouraged by her mentor to move amongst the people and record what remained of the Island's folk memory, language and other unique aspects of Manx life. There are many who still remember this veritable tour-de-force, who were themselves inspired from an early age by her cultural endeavours and have continued to uphold the legacy of both women.

Sophia Morrison and Mona Douglas pursued different avenues in their quest, but were united in their resolve to be a flag-bearer for their beloved Isle of Man. Fortunately the baton has been picked up by many since their time, who now continue Sophia and Mona's important work.

Priced at £12.50, *Sophia Morrison, Mona Douglas and Their Enchanted Isle* is available from bookshops across the Island.

Valerie Caine

© January 2020 (Courtesy of the North Western Chronicle)

AND THE VIXEN SAGA CONTINUES

To Victoria from the Isle of Man in a home-made schooner. The promise of gold has lured many an adventurer to foreign lands. James Cain was one, sailing from the Isle of Man to Victoria in a purpose-built schooner in the 1850's. A fortune in gold eluded him, writes Welcome Wall historian, Veronica Kooyman, but he settled the land and became the ancestor of Australian generations.

Gold transformed the Australian Colonies, and it transformed countless lives too, although not always in the expected way. Manxman, James Cain, embarked on a trim and speedy schooner in 1853, built to carry hopeful prospectors to the Victorian goldfields. For him, the land would yield not gold but an honest farmer's livelihood, enough to found a dynasty of Australians. His name was added to the Welcome Wall by the family of his grandson, Paul Benjamin, and unveiled on a new panel in May 2013.

In 1851 Edward Hargraves discovered a grain of gold near Bathurst, NSW, by legend recognising geological features similar to those of the Californian goldfields from which he'd just returned. Within a few months, Ophir - the place where he found gold - was home to more than a thousand prospectors. Within a year, gold was struck at Ballarat and Bendigo in the colony of Victoria, where a £200 reward had been offered for its discovery. News spread around the world and the gold rush was on. Within two years the State's population exploded from 77,000 to 540,000. Imports and investment boomed, including Australia's first railway and telegraphs, as Victoria contributed more than one third of the world's gold. Immigrants arrived from Britain, the United States, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary and China.

Far away in the Irish Sea, between Ireland and northern England, lies the Isle of Man. Never a part of the UK, it survived on fishing, farming and mining and had suffered a potato crop failure and depression in the late 1840's, encouraging emigration. Lured by the stories of gold discoveries, a group of Manxmen determined to make their way to Victoria and had a schooner named Vixen purpose-built for the long voyage, by H Graves in the port of Peel... coppered... 93 tons new measurement, and has proved herself to be what she appears'. She demonstrated her qualities by outsailing several rivals while earning her keep under charter, in the years before she sailed for the goldfields.

On 26 January 1853, Vixen sailed from Peel carrying 37 men and no shortage of captains. They have been recorded as Captain Tom Cubbon, Vixen's navigator Captain Corlett from the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co., with Port St. Mary fisherman named Captain Sansbury rated as the actual commander. Their cargo included picks, shovels, clothing, boots, barrows and chairs - but no spoons to eat their soup with, in one report. The frugal Manxmen carved spoons from beef bones. All, including 14 married men, had left behind their families to prospect for gold on the other side of the world. The complement included three brothers: James, John and William Cain. They must have sailed swiftly and directly, for it's reported they crossed the Equator on 23 February and reached Port Phillip Heads in only 92 days, arriving in Port Melbourne on 3 May 1853. Vixen was laid up under a watchman and in small parties the adventurers headed for the various goldfields in Victoria.

Mining for gold was hard and dirty work and many prospectors suffered in the hard times. The living conditions were poor, claims were small, competition was fierce and the licence fees were high. Police were deployed on 'digger hunts', searching the WELCOME WALL WINTER.

In one of history's great migrations, over six million people have crossed the seas to settle in Australia. The museum's tribute to all of them, The Welcome Wall, encourages people to recall and record their stories of coming to Australia.

Reproduced courtesy of the Manx National Collection

THE CRUISE OF THE VIXEN

A recent correspondent, Mrs. Marylin Holland, has sent an account of the famous Manx schooner, "Vixen".

She herself is a descendant of one of her Captains, Tom Cubbon. The Museum has photographs of the vessel and of Captain Cubbon, as well as of a group containing him, his sister Mrs. Chas Moore, Mrs. Thomas Halsall, her caught Billy Cubbon (who farmed in New Zealand), Eliza Cubbon, who married a William Gill and emigrated to Illinois. In passing, Mrs. Holland would welcome any news of this William Gill and his forebearers, as indeed of any of the family of Thomas Cubbon, whose wife was a Quaye, who came from 'Santan or South'.

The Vixen was a schooner of 93 tons, built in Peel by H. Graves. The "Manx Sun" of September 6th. 1851 reads:

"The fine clipper schooner, named the Vixen, built by Mr. H. Graves of Peel, sailed from that port on Wednesday, 27th. August. This is one of the finest vessels that has ever been launched in Peel, was coppered before being launched, is 93 tons new measurement, and has proved herself to be what she appears".

There follows an extract from a letter from her Masters: -

"Cardiff, August 29th. 1851 - 'We left the Isle of Man at 10 pm. On Wednesday evening and got to Swansea at 6 o'clock on Thursday evening. We were in company with several schooners and brigs, which we passed as if lying to. There were two Holyhead clippers and we left them out of sight. The pilot here would not believe that the like could be built in the Island. The Vixen is now chartered in a cargo of iron for Messina'."

The Vixen had been built by members of Manxmen determined to reach the Australian goldfields on their own ship, worked by themselves. And accordingly, she began the trip she had been built for at 3 pm. On Wednesday, January 26th. 1853, carrying 37 men, of whom 14 were married.

We can identify the extract which Mrs. Holland quotes and is an extract from "Isle of Man Antiquarian Society Journal" -quote:

'On the day the Vixen left Peel, a three-mastered schooner, the 'Uncle Tom', which had been windbound in Douglas, left that port for the same destination. The Vixen beat her by some days. The little ship was sturdy enough so far as the hull went, but none of those on board had any money to waste on domestic luxuries. On the ninth day out they made some soup, and then discovered that there no spoons to it with. They at once set to work and carved spoons out of old bones, "but", said one of them afterwards, 'how we managed for nine days without discovering there no spoons - or even missing them - is a mystery I could never fathom.' It was fact nevertheless.

On the 7th. February, they overtook the London barque Richard Thornton, which had left the Thames the day before the Vixen sailed from Peel. Tree days later they fell in with another London vessel which had started on her voyage as the Vixen. On the 23rd. February they crossed the line, the first time that 36 out of the 37 had done so. Captain Corlett, from the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co., was the sailing navigator, But Captain Sansbury, a Port St.

Mary fisherman, was rated as actual commander. The weather had then become very hot, and they ran into a tropical rain storm. Here was a chance for them: So, they all undressed, stark naked, climbed up aloft, and enjoyed a good bath!

On the 5th. March, they had another singular experience. Coming up with the American ship, Almeida, on a voyage from Monte Video to New York, and wishing to send some letters home, six of them lowered a small boat and rowed to her. However, the Yankee Captain declined to allow any of them on board 'as he could not understand what so small a craft wanted with so many men'. He had counted 30 heads besides six in the small boat. Next, he discovered a cannon - a two-pounder - mounted on the fo'cs'tle. This decided him. They were pirates. Yet, after a lot of palaver he grudgingly took their letters. After that they enjoyed fine weather and reached Port Phillip Heads in 92 days.

The Vixen carried a miscellaneous home-made cargo. Manx clothing, boots, carts, and such-like odds and ends. Some of the crew organised a little mutiny on their own account; they wanted to seize this cargo as their share and take no part in the profits of the diggings. This was quelled by putting the mutineers into a boat and throwing their chests after them, either into it or the sea - it didn't much matter. This party reached the land in good style - as Manxmen generally do - became dispersed, the married among them seizing the opportunity of ridding themselves of the wives which they had left home: What ultimately became of them no one knows.

The remainder laid the schooner up, detached a watchman from their number, and duly proceeded to the mines. They dug away like mad for a couple of months - but never found a nugget worth sixpence. It dawned upon them, then that the Manx mission in the world lies not upon the land but on the sea. So, they abandoned their claims, trudged back to the Vixen, and (imagine this) started her as a mail boat between Melbourne and Sydney! For a while they did pretty well, and then they turned her into a lighter and wait upon large ships, in and out of Melbourne.

Ten years afterwards 27 of them returned to Peel, making a fine passage home. The Vixen then became a fishing boat. On the day after Good Friday, 1864, she was in the harbour at Peel, ready to start, and the crew were in the old Royal Oak Hotel making merry. A gale was blowing. In spite of the storm, Skipper Sansbury, at high water, insisted on starting, saying that he did not care a___ if they landed in hell! Out the Vixen went, and that was the last seen of her. She foundered, with all hands, near the Calf of Man. Thus, after safely sailing as it were round the globe, she found a grave close at home.

Spurred by the renown of the Vixen and the intrepidity of those on board, another set of Peel men built, a few years later, the little sloop Peveril, and she was also sailed - in charge of Captain Thomas Mylchreest, a brother of the afterwards famous "Diamond King" - out to Melbourne. She was fitted with wooden tanks, and peddle water between Australian ports where that commodity was scarce. She never came back. They sold her at a good profit to a native firm, and it would not at all surprise me if she were yet afloat'.

IRIS LYLE

Produced as an extract from "Manx Notebook" 1968

Manx Sayings

Boayl ta gooice ta keck, as boayl ta mraane ta pleat.

Where there are geese there is dirt, and where there are women there is talking.



HOP TU NAA FAMILY PICNIC

SUNDAY 31ST. OCTOBER

10.00 AM. – 3.00 PM.

BONGAREE BEACH, BRIBIE ISLAND

LOOK FOR THE MANX TENT ADJACENT TO THE PIER.

FOOD AND CATERING SHOPS ARE NEARBY.

BRING A COMFORTABLE CHAIR AND SUNSCREEN AND ENJOY A FUN DAY BY THE WATER. DRESS UP IN HOP TU NAA OUTFITS IF YOU LIKE OR BRING SOME DECORATIONS. WE MAY HAVE SOME MUSIC TO WHILE AWAY THE TIME AS WELL.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO COME BUT DO NOT HAVE TRANSPORT LET GEORGE COWIN KNOW ON 0421210222 AND WE WILL ARRANGE TO PICK YOU UP AND GET YOU THERE.

ANNUAL CALENDAR

31 st . October	QMS Hop Tu Naa Picnic	Bongaree Beach Bribie Island	10.00 am.
27 th . November	CCAQ Christmas Party	Services Club Coorparoo	11.00 am.
5 th . December	Welsh Society Sunshine Coast, Christmas Party & AGM	Indoor Bowls Club 1 Burke St., Caloundra	11.30 am.
11 th . December '21	QMS Christmas Party	Arana Leagues Club Dawson Pde., Keperra	11.00 am.
27 th . February '22	QMS Annual Family Picnic	Jameson Park, Scarborough	10.00 am
1 st . March 2022	St. David's Day Lunch Welsh Society Sunshine Coast	Caloundra Power Boat Club	11.30 am.
26 th . March 2022	CCAQ Pan Celtic Awards Night	West's Rugby League Club Sylvan Rd., Toowong	12.00 noon
26 th . June 2022	CCAQ Friendship Day	590 Creek Rd., Mt Gravatt East	
30 th . July 2022	CCAQ AGM	Coorparoo RSL Club Holdsworthy St., Coorparoo	11.00 am.

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