

## The Isle of Man Festival of Britain Pageants, 1951.



The Festival of Man Souvenir Programme, 1951, issued by the Isle of Man Publicity Board.

Only enthusiasm and endeavour on the widest possible national scale can bring to a ripe fulfilment all the hopes and aspirations of the energetic band of Manx patriots who are planning and preparing the Island's part in the forthcoming Festival of Britain. In our small way we have done much to mould and preserve democracy in its purest parliamentary form; we have sustained through the centuries a simple national way of life based on deep religious conviction and sturdy toil in the field and on the sea; we have made no mean contribution to the Empire in men who have been rightly given a place in our history as "Manx Worthies".<sup>1</sup>

The national exhibition and fair known as the Festival of Britain, took place in the summer of 1951 on London's South Bank. Whilst the Skylon, the iconic symbol of the Festival, together with the Dome of Discovery and the Festival Pleasure Gardens at Battersea provided the most enduring images of the exhibition, a glittering London Arts Season, the opening of the Royal Festival Hall and smaller events and festivals all over the country collectively lit 'a beacon for change', and provided a welcome showcase for British science and technology, as well as an antidote to post-war gloom and austerity. But on the Isle of Man, it very nearly didn't happen at all.

The Isle of Man's participation in Festival of Britain was first proposed by Mr R. B. Megaw of the Manx Museum in July 1948, who prepared a memorandum suggesting that the North American Manx Association be urged to organise a Manx Homecoming in 1951, together with 'historical pageants, an exhibition, tours to places of interest, illuminations and the visit of a battleship!'<sup>2</sup> The idea took root, and early in 1949, it was decided that the Island should stage a Manx pageant or pageants to coincide with Britain's big event',<sup>3</sup> to take place on Tynwald Day, 1951, despite hardships still being experienced by many. The Lieutenant Governor, Air Vice-Marshal Sir Geoffrey Rhodes Bromet, proposed a public meeting of interested parties, and the Government Secretary, J. N. Panes M.A., made tentative enquiries to the Arts Council of Great Britain concerning the Island's decision to mount its own festival. The response indicated that such a Manx event would be welcome, although it would have to be financed from local funds, with the Arts Council of Great Britain's regional offices on hand to give advice and encouragement.

The public meeting was announced in the *Times* for Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1949, at the Tynwald Committee Rooms, Buck's Road, Douglas at 3.00pm.<sup>4</sup> A twenty-eight-strong Committee of Ways and Means was formed, with the following local authorities, businesses and academic organisations represented: the Publicity Board and June Effort and Season Extension Committees, Douglas Corporation, the Village Commissioners, the Manx Music and Drama Festival, the Amateur Dramatic Federation, the Historical and Antiquarian Society, the World Manx Organisation, the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Board of

Education, the Highway and Transport Board, the Local Government Board, the Harbour Board, the Isle of Man Visiting Industry and Catering Association, and local newspapers.

The Lieutenant Governor approached the Postmaster General with a view to issuing an Isle of Man Festival stamp, and in the *Mona's Herald* of 22nd November he urged Tynwald to make a grant towards approved expenditure. In March 1950, Tynwald did indeed approve a grant of £1,000 towards the preliminary expenses of the festival, with the proviso that the committee 'should not spend a shilling where 6d will do'. Mr T. C. Cowin warned of the danger of being carried away by enthusiasm, and asked 'what would (the Island) get out of it?' Money must not be 'frittered away by a lot of nonsense', he said. By the middle of June, the *Mona's Herald* announced under the headline: 'Island's Part in Festival of Britain', that historical pageants were to be staged, and that preliminary plans had been finalised.<sup>5</sup> One thousand actors would be required, and all would be welcome, aged eight years to eighty.

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In September 1950 the *Examiner*<sup>6</sup> noted that, although visitor numbers had been lower by tens of thousands in comparison with recent seasons, the Island continued to maintain an encouraging share of the holiday trade when compared to other resorts, and was not alone in suffering setbacks. Most resorts were finding it harder to attract visitors who paid and stayed rather than day trippers, competition was keener, and 'excursions abroad' were gaining popularity. 'A serious effort is required to maintain the hold we enjoy . . . and win back some lost ground', and in a final statement that shows how little has changed in nearly seventy years: 'there is a tendency to rely too much on the annual boost from road racing fixtures.' It was hoped that the Festival, with its dramatic representations of the Island's most colourful historical events, would encourage holiday makers to embark for Mona's Isle. To this end, a number of peripheral local events were also planned: outdoor plays, tree-planting schemes,<sup>8</sup> sports events, exhibitions at the museum, and the establishment of a new T. E. Brown Memorial Garden in Glen Falcon.

In October 1950, the *Examiner* exhorted the 'Young Folks League' to encourage the Island's young people to get involved,<sup>7</sup> and before the end of that month, Haydn Wood, the appointed festival composer, despatched no less than eight vocal solos and choruses, and a funeral dirge for a scene depicting a burial of a Celtic or Druid Chieftain.

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Mention of Haydn Wood signals that it is time to introduce the primary movers and shakers in the organisation of the great venture. The organising committee was led by 'that Manx patriot', Ramsey B. Moore, OBE, MHK, MLC, Attorney General, antiquarian and author, and a public servant held in great esteem by the Manx people. The secretary and organiser of the festival was Major Thomas E. Brownsdon, OBE, JP, who at the time of the Festival was president of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co. Ltd.

The producer of the pageants was Heath Joyce, a veteran of ten previous pageants including the large-scale Sheffield Pageant of Production in 1948, and the Nottingham Quincentenary Pageant in 1949. His was the most exacting, all-encompassing and arduous role, and he was ably assisted by George Batty.

The script for the pageants was devised and produced by the dramatic historian, author and playwright for radio, stage and screen, Laurence du Garde Peach, at the suggestion of Councillor F. M. Corkill, the ex-Mayor of Douglas.<sup>9</sup> Joyce and du Garde Peach had previously collaborated on pageants in Nottingham and Sheffield.

Haydn Wood: '. . . the famous composer, whom the Island claims as her own . . .' was the ideal choice to provide the vast amount of varied music - solo vocal, choral and orchestral - that the pageants required. He had spent his childhood in Douglas,<sup>10</sup> and as a famous composer, had written a number of fine orchestral works based on Manx traditional melodies and folklore, all imbued with the spirit of the Island's history and outstanding scenery. Furthermore, Wood refused a fee, for he saw his task as a labour of love, and 'an expression of gratitude to his childhood home'. The festival committee subsequently sent Mrs Wood a radiogram.

Dr George Tootell, a cinema organist of genius, and the composer of the Manx cantata *The Legend of Man*, was appointed as the musical director. Assisting him was the official accompanist Miss Emily Christian, MBE, LRAM, a gifted pianist, accompanist, teacher and conductor, whose life was 'devoted to the service of Manx music'. The traditional Manx dances were arranged and choreographed by Pipa Stuart; the wardrobe mistress was Monica Campbell.

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Some 350 people were present at a public meeting at the Villa Marina on 13th November 1950, hosted by the Lieutenant Governor, at which Heath Joyce, du Garde Peach and Haydn Wood were present. Some of Haydn Wood's pageant songs were performed, and 'made a deep impression'. A report from a delegation from the Island to Norway earlier that month brought the news that some sort of Norse participation in events was discussed, and met with great interest. A further meeting at the Villa Marina took place on 13<sup>th</sup> November; '. . . all persons with musical or dramatic experience invited to attend', and Haydn Wood once again introduced some of his music for the pageants. A northern meeting was held shortly afterwards at St Paul's Church Hall, Ramsey.

As the year began to draw to a close the Festival organisers attempted to arouse a more positive and active response from the islanders. According to R. B. Moore in the *Examiner*, 'the presentation of the Island's remarkable story would require historical knowledge and vision . . . the island people must take part . . .' In his view, the festival would either be a 'most wonderful achievement . . . or a most glorious flop!'<sup>11</sup> The local authorities were urged to play their part in ensuring that the Island's communities would reap lasting benefits from their commitment, thus fulfilling one of the most important principles of the Festival as a whole. Before the end of the year the news filtered through that either King Haakon VII of Norway, or Crown Prince Olav, had been invited to attend the Festival, and that Winston Churchill might also be present to receive the Freedom of Douglas. It was not possible to arrange for a member of the British Royal Family to visit the Island during the Festival.

### **No 'Thees' and 'Thous'**

In January 1951, Heath Joyce was again on the Island organising interviews with potential participants. He estimated that 650 volunteers would be required to adequately cast the pageants, not only actors and singers, comedians and dancers, but instrumentalists too. 'The cream of the Island's talent' would be sought, as there would be eighty speaking parts, and the principals would be required to sing as well as act. The British Legion would be invited to provide men-at-arms; dance teachers would be encouraged to work with the schools; large numbers of electricians, and stage hands to make and paint the portable scenery were wanted, and a large and inventive wardrobe team to make hundreds of costumes.

Most of Joyce's previous pageants had been in large towns or cities; the Isle of Man Festival Pageant was his first endeavour devoted to an entire country! It would be 'an unforgettable source of national pride and inspiration (and) a reminder (for the older generations) of the strength from which they have sprung'. Famous episodes, such as the execution of Iliam Dhoo, would be re-enacted with large-scale crowd scenes and choruses. Du Garde Peach confirmed that the action would be fast paced, like a revue or musical comedy, and the language would be the language of the people, with no 'thees' and 'thous'.

February 1951 was a hectic month with auditions for speaking parts and those in crowd scenes getting underway, and with members of the Green Room Players, Ramsey Grammar School's Old Scholars Dramatic Society, the Legion Players, and the Student Players eager to take part. The first rehearsals for the dancers also began, and it seemed as if a revival of Manx dancing was emerging. Fifteen choirs, including those from the Manx Operatic Society, the Choral Union, the Lon Dhoo and Ramsey Male Voice choir, had been contacted, and their first rehearsals began on 14<sup>th</sup> February under Dr Tootell.

A major disappointment had to be endured that month when the official Festival of Britain handbook appeared, and failed to mention the contribution of the Isle of Man! This was no unfortunate oversight; nor was it the fault of the Island's Festival committee being a little tardy in making known the details of the Manx contribution to the Festival of Britain. The explanation was straight forward and to the point: the Island was not part of Britain, was not formally taking part in the Festival of Britain, and was holding its own parallel festival as a tourist attraction. The Isle of Man Pageants did, however, get a mention in a later handbook

concerning regional festivals, and in the Continental Daily Mail. The British Travel and Holidays Association handbook for the period does mention the Island, but only in connection with the road races.

### **'The National Spirit must be invoked'**

As February progressed the *Examiner* proclaimed: 'Festival Plans Take Shape'.<sup>12</sup> Heath Joyce was once again present on the Island in order to drum up more local support, and to audition more cast members. Some Manx people, he observed, were just too shy to come forward, and others were concerned that rehearsals would take up too much time during the run-up to the holiday season. There was also some disquiet voiced that the festival would interfere with the schools' examination period.

In addition to the principal roles, Joyce was hoping to engage a further two hundred actors and singers, one hundred children and one hundred and fifty dancers. He detected a defeatist attitude in some quarters, with some thinking that the Festival of Britain idea was at best 'a necessary evil'. Pageants on such a large scale, he argued, were 'bound to bring visitors'. This was not the time for 'Traa di looar'; the success of the Manx Festival was 'a matter of National honour', that should 'reflect all the glory and tradition that is woven into Manx history'. The spectre of failure would appear if the 'dismal prophets' perpetuated in their predictions of disaster. 'The national spirit must be invoked to see the project through'. He needn't have worried, because, as he later recalled: 'I found more natural talent on the Isle of Man than anywhere else I produced pageants'.

In March came discouraging news from the English regions: the festivals at Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Wokingham had been abandoned due to lack of local enthusiasm. On the Island, however, some four hundred of the six hundred and fifty participants needed had now been auditioned, and Joyce decided to remain in permanent residence until after the Festival. The Festival of Man programme was launched that month, and the dates and venues were confirmed as follows: the pageants would be staged between 19<sup>th</sup> June - 3<sup>rd</sup> July; June 19<sup>th</sup> in Ramsey; June 21<sup>st</sup> in Peel; June 26<sup>th</sup> in Castletown, and July 3<sup>rd</sup> in Douglas.

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News from the financial front was also promising. Tynwald voted an additional £400 on top of the initial grant of £1,000 devoted to the Festival, and a further £7,500 towards the total projected cost of £8,900. Dissenting voices still had much to complain about however: £8,000 would have built several houses! Not a single visitor would come to the Island just to see the pageants; even Blackpool had apparently turned down the idea of its own festival. The appropriate counter-arguments were stronger: even if Britain had little to be festive about in 1951, the Isle of Man did, and, furthermore, the pageants would be of enormous educational value for Manx youth. As for the pageants being a waste of money, Joyce himself responded that there were 'some things left that cannot be expressed in pounds, shillings and pence'.

A certain amount of keen speculation was generated by the *Examiner* in March, when it reported that the BBC was rumoured to be planning a number of broadcasts of the pageants and the TT, rumours apparently borne out by a visit of the controller of the North Region to the Island. It was thought - optimistically as it turned out - that television could come to the eastern side of the Island in the autumn, as a result of the setting up of the Home Moss transmitter over one hundred miles away in the South Pennines. The BBC itself remained non-committal.<sup>13</sup> A cinema newsreel team was also expected to film some of the Festival events.

The *Mona's Herald* kept everyone up to date on the progress of the choir rehearsals during March and April, culminating in the Massed Musical Comedy and Choir Rehearsal at the Villiers Hotel, Douglas, on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> April. Male voices and church and chapel choirs in particular were urged to make every effort to be present, as further rehearsals and costume fittings would be organised throughout the month.

### **'All now in place with just a month to go'.<sup>14</sup>**

The *Times* announced the appointment of the key speaking role in the pageants in early April: that of the narrator, Manannan himself, chosen after a quest for 'a man of huge frame and powerful voice'. The Islander chosen for this important role was sixty-eight-year-old Mr Edward Cooper of Castletown, with forty years' experience as a stage and screen actor, and at 6' 2" tall, with a 44" chest, he was a powerful and imposing figure with a cavernous, commanding voice.<sup>15</sup>

Other, less glamorous, issues were hotly debated at length and brought to satisfactory conclusions, including, in April, the various stages of the Isle of Man Festival of Britain Bill, which allowed the Highway and Transport Board to control traffic on the roads.<sup>16</sup> One concession, to allow Douglas Corporation omnibuses to transport spectators to the Braddan outdoor services site in competition with the Hackney and Road Service vehicles, proved controversial until the Nunnery grounds were chosen for the Douglas Pageant. In fact the site for the Douglas Pageant was finally decided late in the day, and then only after much debate. A number of sites were considered including Castleward near Kirk Braddan, Port-e-Chee Meadow near the Quarterbridge (now the home of Douglas Rugby Club) and the Villa Marina Gardens.<sup>17</sup> Thanks to the generosity of their owner, Captain Fry Goldie-Taubman, the Nunnery grounds were eventually chosen for the Douglas site, although the start time for the Pageant was pushed forward from 7.15pm to 8.00pm to allow participants to travel from either north or south of the Island.<sup>18</sup>

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As the Festival approached, more fringe events were announced including Festival excursions to historical sites organised by the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society throughout May and June, and lectures organised by the Isle of Man Scientific Society. In May A. B. Moore visited the Festival of Britain on the South Bank and spent three hours touring the exhibitions, and noted a brief reference to the TT in the transport pavilion. His considered opinion was that the success of the Festival in London was unlikely to affect the number of visitors from the North of England to the Isle of Man, as the cost of accommodation in London was 'outrageously heavy'.

In May, what was billed as the 'first Festival event' took place in Laxey: *The Manx Wedding*, a local pageant based on the old Manx song. Apparently the Union Jack was much in evidence, 'but where', asked one commentator, 'was the Manx flag to be seen?' Also that month a delegation from Norway visited the Island,<sup>20</sup> and, at a reception at the Manx Museum, presented to the Museum five handsomely-bound manuscript volumes on behalf of the Norwegian Government, containing the complete phonetic rendering in Manx Gaelic of recordings made between 1929-33 of ten of the last native speakers, principally Harry Kelly.<sup>21</sup>

### **Dramatic realism on a large scale**

On Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June there was a full-scale rehearsal in the Palace Ballroom. All principals, singers, actors and dancers were in attendance under the direction of Heath Joyce. Coaches from Ramsey, Laxey, Port Erin, Castletown and Peel ferried the participants around the Island, as they did for the final rehearsal held in the grounds of Peel Castle on the following Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> June. Even at this late stage, Heath Joyce appealed in the local newspapers for more volunteers to assist with the costumes and make-up, props and stage management and for extra crowd marshalls.

There followed four performances of the pageant between 19<sup>th</sup> June and 3<sup>rd</sup> July, in Ramsey, Peel, Castletown and finally at the Nunnery, Douglas. The Pageant was on such a scale that it could not be performed all in one go. The first part of the story, from Neolithic Man to the Norse Kings, was staged in Ramsey on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> June, and repeated at Peel Castle on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup>. The second part, from the invasion of Robert the Bruce to modern times, was given the following week in Castletown on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> June and repeated with some modification in Douglas on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July. All performances commenced at 8.00pm.

**'A people's play . . . the greatest effort of its kind ever conceived on the Island . . . nothing in Britain to compare'.** (Lawrence du Garde Peach.)

Ramsey and Peel: 'Vikings will invade our shores again'.

The first of the Festival Pageants were held at Ramsey at the northern end of Mooragh Park, where the sloping brows (a rugged sandy area with gorse) provided a natural background. The *Ramsey Courier*, 15<sup>th</sup> June, recorded 'a brilliant spectacle . . . colourful and impressive', as the Island's story unfolded in music, dance and drama, in front of a crowd of three thousand spectators assembled on Mooragh Brows.

The *Mona's Herald*, 19<sup>th</sup> June, announced that there were plans to broadcast some of the Festival events from new a studio in Douglas, and that a report from the island would be heard on Children's Hour.

*Ramsey Courier*, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, promised a 'Brilliant Spectacle' with colourful and impressive scenes from Manx history portrayed in music, dancing and drama. A large dais was erected in the centre of the arena for the depiction of the roasting of an elk killed by hunters, and later did service for the scenes of St. Maughold's first call to follow Christianity, and the first Tynwald.

Nearly three thousand attended in Ramsey, and the local newspapers were generally enthusiastic, referring to it as 'a spectacle worthy of our Island story'. The orchestra was praised for not intruding too much! Arthur Quirk (chief Viking) and Douglas Quirk received praise for their memorable singing, as did Kathleen Mitchell, narrator; Maie Bosworth, jester, on a white horse; and Elsie Cubbon, the soloist in the 'Little people of Man' scene. A plan to have a replica of a Viking long-ship on the beach was abandoned; Morris Kewley as St Maughold was 'immense', and the smaller parts all well-characterised. Haydn and Dorothy Wood were among the guests observed in Lieutenant Governor Bromet's party. The full effect of the closing scenes was lost, however, due to the late start of the pageant and the fading light.

A smaller cast of some three hundred participants took part in the repeat of the first part of the Festival, held at Peel Castle on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> June. The magnificent ruins on their island site proved to be not entirely satisfactory, however, owing to a cold wind whipping round the castle walls. Some of the dialogue was lost, and some of those attending left early.

#### Castletown

The second part of the Festival, the Castletown pageant, was staged in the town square with the grim bulk of Castle Rushen silhouetted against the sky and illuminated by floodlights, providing an ideal backcloth to the most war-like episodes in the story. Two thousand people crowded into the square which was strewn with grass and rushes, and, at the tolling of the castle bell and the summoning call of Manannan, the entire cast of six hundred people in Manx costumes entered the square and formed up on the grassy 'apron' in front of the fortress.

The Manx dancers led by Leighton Stowell<sup>22</sup> 'excelled themselves' in their massed jig, and the children's choir from Castle Rushen School, conducted by Harry Pickard,<sup>23</sup> were 'first rate', and gave especial pleasure. A number of well-known local singers including Arthur Quirk, Eileen Peters and John Miles took the prominent singing roles, and Edward Cooper proved to be a splendid Mannanan, linking the various scenes as commentator. Kathleen Mitchell excelled as the narrator, as did Maie Bosworth as the Jester.

There followed a 'parade of all the fighting men who had defended the Island from the days of the Fiery Cross to the Second World War', led by four bands. Douglas Town Band led a squad of 'old sweats' of World War I; Castletown Metropolitan Band and Sea Cadets represented the navy; the Army cadets represented the Army, and the number 1 Regional Band of the Royal Air Force entered the square to an energetic RAF march. As darkness fell on the final scene, the three armed services marched into the square. At 11.00pm the Manx flag dipped as the Last Post sounded, followed by the entire company and audience singing the Manx Fisherman's Evening Hymn, *Hear us O Lord*, followed by the Manx and Royal National Anthems. 'An unforgettable memory', recorded the *Examiner*.<sup>24</sup>

The dramatic scenes were impressively portrayed, and included the storming of Castle Rushen by Robert the Bruce, and the death of the Manx hero Illiam Dhone:

'A traitor is dead' proclaimed the Earl of Derby following the execution of the Manx hero Illiam Dhone.

'A patriot lives forever', responded the crowd'.<sup>25</sup>

There followed a large-scale masque depicting the Stanley era, and local singer Eileen Peters assumed the role of Ellan Vannin to great effect.

A colourful scene recreating the 'the Manx (Tynwald) Fair of 1750 opened Act II, with realistic side shows and entertainments including Manx dancing from one hundred girls. The crowds at the fair included tumblers, strolling players, quack doctors, a performing bear, smugglers, a gymnastic display by boys from King William's College and the appearance of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. At one stage in the proceedings Heath Joyce was observed directing operations at key points from the balcony of the George Hotel by telephone!

## Douglas

Earl and Countess of Derby were received at Government House on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July by the Lieutenant Governor and Lady Bromet, and were present later that day at the Douglas pageant held at the Nunnery. Heath Joyce, Lawrence du Garde Peach and Haydn Wood were presented to the distinguished guests. Despite the heavy downpours that disrupted the event - Manannan, it was suggested, must have been working overtime to produce such persistent mist and rain - which resulted in the three thousand-strong crowd dwindling to less than five hundred by the end of the evening, the event was judged a triumph. Those brave souls who braved the elements and, hunched under umbrellas and mackintoshes, endured several drenchings, were rewarded by a truly magnificent finale. By 10.00pm the red of the sashes of Leighton Stowell's young dancers 'ran' in the rain and stained their white shirts blood red, and many spectators left early to escape the rain and sit in their coaches, thereby missing the final march past of the Royal Air Force, illuminated by the welcome glare of searchlights.

Many scenes were clearly much enjoyed, particularly 'The coming of the railway', with its comic routine and song, with plenty of mutton-chop whiskers on display. The costumes of the Victorian bathing belles 'caused hearty laughter' and helped to dispel the gloomy effect of the threatening skies, which 'were forgotten in the gaiety, colour and spectacle of the Pageant itself'. The Douglas pageant was in fact a conflation of those staged in Ramsey and Castletown and was adjudged to be a more polished production than that staged at either the northern resort and the Island's ancient capital. The representations of Castle Rushen in painted 'flats', colourful jousting tents and the mini-Tynwald Hill contributed towards the festive atmosphere, although there was some adverse criticism directed at the basic provision made for the spectators.<sup>28</sup>

### Aftermath

The substantial sum of £7,500 earmarked by Tynwald to defray the expenses of the Festival of Man had not been exceeded! It was also suggested that festival scenes could be repeated in future years, but this idea has so far failed to take root.<sup>26</sup> Despite the obvious success of the Festival, the detractors naturally felt the need to voice their reservations. Mr T. C. Cowin - a persistent gainsayer throughout - whilst grudgingly acknowledging that the Festival had been a huge success, 'made bold to say that not one person came to the Island for its sake . . . other than those who were invited, and were therefore paid 'guests', and that the money could have been spent 'in a more lasting way'. However, the Speaker of Tynwald, voicing the thoughts and feelings of the majority responded:

. . . that very few people with Manx blood in them could have failed to be thrilled by the greatness and wonder of our little Island's story . . . the pageants were a reminder of the Island's glory and therefore a price could not be placed upon them.

### And finally:

The following two announcements appeared in the local newspapers the week after the pageants:<sup>29</sup>

Will the persons who borrowed oilskin clothes and other effects from the Nunnery please return them to the Festival of Britain Festival Office, 1, Hope Street, Douglas.

Will the members of the Cushag Choir . . . kindly return all music to 11, Lezayre Rd, Ramsey.

### Appendices

All the surviving material for the Festival of Man Pageants - musical scores and orchestral parts, songs and choruses, the play scripts and the Festival Programme - and can be viewed at the Manx Museum.<sup>27</sup> For those, however, who do not enjoy the luxury of hours of exploration in the Museum Library, here is a description, firstly, of the overall scenario, and secondly of the musical numbers.

#### 1: The Scenario.

Scenes from Manx history told with drama and comedy in twenty scenes and a Finale, in two parts, of two acts each part. Scenes 1-10 were staged in Ramsey and Peel; scenes 11-20 and Finale were staged at Castle Rushen; a reduced version and selection from the pageants was staged in Douglas.

## **Part 1**

Prologue: Mannanan, Narrator and Jester.

Act 1:

Scene 1. Neolithic (2500 BC)

Scene 2. Celtic Age (2000 BC)

Scene 3. The Little People of Man.

Scene 4. Christianity

Scene 5. The Coming of the Vikings

Act 2:

Scene 6. Tynwald (1070 AD)

Scene 7. Legend

Scene 8. The Ship

Scene 9. The Battle of Santwatt (1090 AD)

Scene 10. The Kings of Man (1019 AD – 1265 AD)

## **Part II:**

Prologue: Mannanan, Narrator and Jester.

Act 1:

Scene 11. Robert the Bruce (1313 AD)

Scene 12. The Waring Banner (1266 AD – 1405 AD)

Scene 13. The Masque of the Stanleys (1405 AD – 1863 AD)

Scene 14. Illiam Dhoan (1649 AD – 1863 AD)

Act 2:

Scene 15. The Fair (1750 AD)

Scene 16. Bishop Wilson (1750 AD)

Scene 17. The First Railway (1873 AD)

Scene 18. King William's College

Scene 19. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Scene 20. Bathing Belles.

Finale: 'a muster of armed forces'; the Last Post; the Fishermans' Hymn; Land of our Birth; God Save the King.

## **2: The Music:**

The surviving music consists of thirty-one musical numbers, including, songs, choruses, Manx dances, melodrama, 'The Manx Fishermen's Evening Hymn', The Manx National Anthem: 'O Land of Our Birth', 'God



Save the King' and 'They Rest in Peace Who Ruled as Kings of Man', plus an overture or opening march, fanfares, battle music, the Last Post, and miscellaneous pieces and fragments difficult at this distance in time to confidently attribute to specific scenes, and which may not have been performed.

A Manx Overture: 'The Island of Mountains and Glens' (1936) or Festival March (1949?). The overture may have been discarded as being too long or impracticable for outdoor performance.

Fanfare for two trumpets before and after Manannan's opening speech.

### **Act 1:**

Scene 1: The Neolithic Age.

1. Neolithic Hunting Song: 'In the sky the fire of dawning'. (Neolithic Man and chorus; C major; 6/8, Con spirito.)

2. 'We're Neolithic people of the Neolithic Age'. (solo and unison chorus; G major; 6/8; Moderato.)

Scene 2: The Celtic Age.

3. March of the Celts. (characterised by rhythmic 'Scotch snaps', cymbal, timpani and side drum; G minor; 2/4.)

Possible Battle Music.

Scene 3: The Little People of Man.

4. Song of the Sprites (soloist Elsie Cubbon) and Dance of the Sprites: 'Out of the rocks and out of the waves'. (G major)

Scene 4: Christianity.

5. Chant: 'Out of the sun came life' (sombre brass with fanfares; G major; slow; Alla breve) for members of the Funeral Procession of the Celtic Chieftain; middle section: 'The Gods looked down on this world of Man'. (3/4; Db major)

6. Homage March.

Scene 5: The Coming of the Vikings.

7. Battle Music (C minor; 4/4; agitated, turbulent, full orchestra.)

8. The Song of the Vikings: 'The lean black ships are waiting'. (baritone solo and unison male chorus)

9. Ballad of the Isles of the West: 'Over the sea were the Isles of the West'. (four solo voices, one for each verse 1-4 and male chorus)

10. Honour the Past: 'The lives of men are lived and done . . . Here in this place, men lived other lives'. (four-part chorus for the entire company in a broad anthem style)

10a. Homage March, and Harry Wood's arrangement of 'Illiam Dhoan' (Drogh Vranne) from his Manx Airs, re-orchestrated by Haydn Wood .

### **Act 2:**

Scene 6: Tynwald.

Fanfare of two trumpets.

11. 'Makers of Today': 'Heroes of the past we honour'. (Sullivan-esque ballad/hymn, reminiscent of 'Onward Christian Soldiers' for unison male chorus; some two-part writing near the end.)

**12.** 'Joy of the Dance', sung by the dancers (G major; sprightly 6/8; nimble woodwind, glockenspiel and pizzicato strings) leading to a dance with full orchestra.

Scene 7: The Ballad of Cronk Ny Merriu.

**13.** 'The Lord of the Steadings by Cronk Ny Merriu'. (a long ballad in twelve verses or stanzas sung by the Gleema(e)n, followed by a lengthy orchestral epilogue and dances.)

Scene 8: The Ship.

**14.** Choral music (orchestra optional) for the end of the scene.

**15.** 'The patriot sons of Mona, Great Buonaparte to whip', based on 'The Cruise of the "Tiger"'. (full orchestra and unison chorus; robust, rollicking style)

Scene 9: The Battle of Santwatt.

**16.** March 'Torch of Freedom'.

Scene 10: The Kings of Man.

**17.** In Ancient Times: 'In ancient times we tilled the land . . . The times of plenty are now gone'. (4-part chorus of prosperous and miserable peasants).

## **Part II**

### **Act 1:**

Scene 11: Robert the Bruce.

**18.** 'The Ballad of Robert the Bruce' (soloists and martial chorus).

Scene 12: no music.

Scene 13: The Masque of Ellan Vannin.

**19-20.** A long scene with spoken dialogue (melodrama), mime and dance. Ellan Vannin represents the Isle of Man. Eight Stanleys representing Fear, Strife, Power, Hunger, Justice, Authority, Peace, Security and the Church. Manannan's speech. No songs or choruses.

Scene 14: Illiam Dhoan. No music.

### **Act II:**

Scene 15: The Fair.

**23.** Smugglers' Song: 'On a dark and moonless night. (male voices; Sullivan-esque in style.)

Scene 16: no music.

Scene 17: The First Railway.

**24:** The Railway Song: 'We've a very famous railway in this happy little Isle' (three men and one soloist). Refrain: 'I'm the Guard, and I'm the Driver'. (Train effect with sandpaper. Haydn Wood's instructions in the score: 'rub two pieces of sandpaper together'.)

Scene 18: King William's College. No music.

Scene 19: Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

**25.** The Lifeboat Song: 'The rockets flare to the energy sky'. Refrain: 'O man the boat! Let go! Away!'. Bright march style. 'Where once they strained at the heavy oar; today is the sturdy engine's roar'. (solo and chorus)

Scene 20: The Bathing Belles. (fourteen girls, plus three beaux and one chaperone.)

**26.** 'I do like to be beside the seaside'.

Note in the programme: 'Men in the audience are requested to keep their seats. The use of opera glasses is forbidden'.

Scene 21-22: FINALE. 'A muster of army forces that have defended these shores since the early days of the Fiery Cross . . .'

**27.** The Army: 'Join the army, see the world beneath the flag that's never furled'. (Baritone solo; march tempo in a shanty/nautical style.)

The Last Post.

Spoken: Laurence Binyon's 'For the Fallen'. 'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old'.

Manx Fishermen's Evening Hymn, 'The Harvest of the Sea'.

'O Land of Our Birth'.

'God Save the King'.

'They rest in peace who ruled as Kings of Man'.

**Maurice Powell, Andreas, July, 2017.**

Notes.

1. R. B. Moore quoted in 'Our Opinion', *Mona's Herald*, 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1950, from his outline of the provisional programme that the Festival of Man committee eventually adopted.

2. Megaw, Basil Richardson Stanley, Director of the Manx Museum 1940-57. A fine scholar of Manx topics, his wife, Eleanor Mary, was an eminent archaeologist and anthropologist. No battleship materialised during the Festival, but the Battle-class destroyer *HMS Cadiz* was scheduled to visit the Island between July 2<sup>nd</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup>, and *HMS Manxman*, the Island's adopted mine layer, paid a visit in September.

3. *IoMT*, 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1949.

4. *IoMT*, 12<sup>th</sup> Nov, 1949.

5. The *Mona's Herald*, 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1950. The executive Committee of the Isle of Man Festival of Britain 1951 made modest grants available to some smaller parish councils such as Marown, Laxey and Lonan from the 'pot' of £1,000 voted by Tynwald.

6. *IoME*, 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1950

7. *IoME*, October 27<sup>th</sup> 1950.

8. What may have been the first 'official' festival event occurred in February, 1951: beech tree planting at Douglas High School for Boys, attended by the Lieutenant Governor, during which the first of 100 trees were planted to make an avenue at the school.

9. Lawrence du Garde Peach (1890-1974) wrote regularly for the BBC's Children's Hour, and after World War II, helped organise a number of large-scale theatrical pageants in Sheffield, Nottingham, Wolverhampton, Manchester and elsewhere. A former editor of *Punch*, he is best remembered today for over thirty books in the *Adventure from History* series for children published by Ladybird Books between 1957 and 1974. He was awarded an OBE for his services to literature in 1972.

10. Haydn Wood's elder brother Harry was the musical director of the Palace & Derby Castle Company for more than forty years. For further details concerning the Wood family on the Isle of Man, see Maurice Powell, *Manxland's King of Music, the Life and Times of Harry Wood*. Lily Publications, 2017.

11. *IoME*, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1950.

12. *IoME*, 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1951.

13. *IoME*, 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1951. The island was really outside the range of the Holme Moss transmitter, but some pictures did get through in September, and were watched by hundreds of people standing outside radio and TV dealers in Douglas.

14. Heath Joyce, *IoME*, 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1951.

15. Edward Cooper had recently retired to the Island with his wife Ethel Griffies - who appeared in over 100 films - after twenty-six years in Hollywood.

16. *IoME*, 13<sup>th</sup> April. 1951.

17. *IoME*, 27<sup>th</sup> April. 1951. The Castleward site: Castleward ie Knoc y Troddan, the Hill of Contest (or the Fight), near Braddan, whilst ideal for Douglas audiences, was too uneven for dancing. The Villa Marina Gardens were seriously considered but the position of the bandstand ultimately ruled them out.

18. *IoMT*, 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1951.

19. *The Mona's Herald*, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1951.

20. The delegation consisted of Professors Carl J.S. Marstrander (Celtic linguist and historian) and Bjo(r)n Hougen from the University of Oslo, Professor Hakon Shetelig from the University of Bergen, and Mr F. Wolfsberg. Also present were the Bishop of Nidaros, Norway, and Dr Arne Fjellbu.

21. Harry Kelly (1852-1925), Manx fisherman, crofter and native Manx speaker. His cottage in Cregneash was donated to the Manx Museum after his death, and is one of the most visited sites in the historic village.

22. Leighton Stowell, 'a Manxman's Manxman', folk dancer and Manx scholar, bird watcher and artist, and a founder member of the Manx Folk Dance Society. He was the church organist, pianist and choir master of the Castletown Primitive Methodist Chapel for some 35 years, and received an award from the Manx Music and Drama Festival for his services to Manx folk dancing.

23. Henry 'Harry' Pickard, LTCL, LRAM, renowned teacher, musician and conductor especially of choirs. His legacy was 'the development of school and community music-making to previously almost unattainable heights'.

24. *IoME*, 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1951.

25. *IoMT*, 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1951.

26. Having examined the surviving performing material, I believe that it would be possible to perform a selection taken from the orchestral pieces (overture, marches, battle music etc) and some of the Manx dances, with some of our young Manx dancers in costume, at a Manx Music Festival or perhaps Tynwald Day event in the future.

27. Manx Museum: Festival Programme, J.62/Fes, M 15233; Musical scores and performing parts, boxes 9429/1 and 2; Haydn Wood 14 Manx-inspired works, J48/24 x f, M 09269b.

28. There were further festive celebrations on Tynwald Day, 5th July, with a World Manx Association rally in the afternoon, a concert in the Palace, with choir of 250, in the evening, and a boat regatta and firework display to end the evening.

29. *IoMT*, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1951.

A selection of photographs of the Festival of Man Pageants can be found in the following local newspapers:

The *Isle of Man Examiner*, 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1951, shows the giant elk under construction.

*The Ramsey Courier*, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 1951, shows a scene in Mooragh Park.

The *Isle of Man Examiner*, 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1951, shows the arrest of Illiam Dhone, enacted in Castletown Square.

The *Isle of Man Examiner*, 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1951, shows a scene from the Nunnery pageant, and the character of Manannan.

