

KIAULL MANNINAGH JIU

Boaldyn 2025 May

MANX MUSIC TODAY

Celebration of Manx Dance opens the 2025 Music Music Festival



The opening day of the 2025 Manx Music Festival [AKA the Guild] saw a spectacular morning of folk dancing in the Royal Hall of the Villa Marina in Douglas. Adjudicated by Rachel Clarkson, there was an entertaining variety of performances from all ages representing groups Perree Bane, Arbory School, Skeddán Jiarg and Rhythm of Bulgaria. Manx dances performed included; Cummaghyn, Dance for Three, Shooyl Inneenyn, The White Boys' sword dance, Car ny Rankee, Car Juan Nan, Eunyssagh Vona, Car y Phoosee, Cutting the Turf [Daunse ny Moain], Moirrey ny Cainle, Fathaby Jig, Jemmy as Nancy, Flitter Dance, and Moghrey mie as Maynrys! There were also folk dances from England, Wales, Bulgaria and the USA! Read the competition results here:

www.manxmusicfestival.org/assets/Results/2025/a726aeda66/Saturday-26th-April-2025-Results.pdf

During the rest of the Guild, there will be Manx Gaelic song, choir and language classes, plus Manx music performed in various instrumental solo and group classes.

In this month's edition...

- Shennaghys Jiu 2025 in photos
- History of "Ramsey Town"
- Oie Voaldyn - Manx Fire Festival

Culture
VANNIN



Front page: Skeddan Jiarg teens who won their class dancing "Cummaghyn" and their high marks gained them The Leighton Stowell Cup for Folk Dancing [see list of winners in the RESEARCH pages >>] This page [top left clockwise]: Skeddan Jiarg adults, Skeddan Jiarg primary group, Rhythm of Bulgaria, full Skeddan Jiarg and [middle] Perree Bane adults.



Well done to 'Thurric' who represented the Isle of Man in last week's Pan-Celtic Song Contest in Carlow, Ireland. The musical duo (Sue Harrison and Rob Middleton) took fourth place in the contest, and along with Manx delegate Nicola Tooms, performed Manx songs and tunes at various spots around Carlow during the festival.

32 string autoharp
- free to a good
home.

**Contact Reverend
Janet Hamer
on 07624 462251**

SAVE THE DATE!
<https://makemusicday.org/>



ISLE OF MAN
Laa Jannoo Kiaull
JUNE 21

SHENNAGHYS JIU 2025





Photo credits: Valerie Caine, James Franklin, Shennaghys Jiu
 Lots more photos on: www.facebook.com/shennaghysjiu

JUST RELEASED

Videos from the 2025 Aundyryn Kiaull-Theay Vannin - Manx Folk Awards:
<https://culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/manx-folk-awards-2025-893681/>



REPORT in The Manx Independent: <https://tinyurl.com/3fmtb2ft>



Ny Fennee harpists performed at the opening of a new exhibition celebrating the 160th anniversary of Manx designer and artist Archibald Knox in the Manx Museum, Douglas.

<https://manxnationalheritage.im/whats-on/detail/knox-order-beauty/>

Photo thanks to Valerie Caine

Sunday 4th May

BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND

Peel Beach & Promenade

2.00pm - Music & Food / Viking Games

8.45pm - Fire Show • 10.00pm - Fireworks



**MANX MAY DAY AND
EVENING FIRE FESTIVAL**

SPONSORED BY

ELEMENT ISLE



FREE EVENT - SUITABLE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY



OIE VOALDYN programme:
<https://tinyurl.com/3wtr8d78>



Listen again to BBC Radio 4's Easter Sunday
Sunrise Service

www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002b6kn

which includes Manx songs "Now the boats are
outward sailing" and "Irree ny Greiney" plus Manx
tune "Flitter Dance".

Music was provided by Peel Cathedral Choir,
directed by Dr Peter Litman, Manx choir Caarjyn
Coodjagh, and Manx folk musicians led by David
Kilgallon.

Celebrate Laa Boaldyn – Manx May Day!

Step into spring with a joyful celebration of Manx culture and tradition at Laa Boaldyn!

Date: Monday, 5th May 2025

Location: Cregneash Village

Time: 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Experience the vibrant customs of Manx May Day with:

- Traditional music and dancing
- Family friendly workshops creating Crosh Cuirns
- Folklore stories and legends of Manx traditions, from warding off evil spirits to ancient seasonal rituals

Embrace the spirit of the Isle of Man and welcome the warmer days ahead in a setting steeped in history and charm.

Admission: Included with standard entry to Cregneash

More info:

<https://tinyurl.com/2jkma2c6>



LEARN more about May music and dance traditions, plus the curious customs associated with Oie Voaldyn (May Eve) and Laa Boaldyn (May Day)

<https://culturevannin.im/manxfolklore/boaldyn-475492/>



Post Guild Concert



**METHODIST
CHURCH HALL**

Wednesday 21st May

Start: 7.30 p.m.

Compere: Judith Ley

Accompanist: Gareth Moore

A great nights entertainment with lots of excellent performers from the Guild. Proceeds in aid of Chapel Funds

Admission £10 including country supper
All Welcome – Pay on the Door

Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering

Coffee Morning

• Kiaull as Caffee •
Music and Coffee

Saturday 10th May



10am - 12pm



Ebenezer Hall • Kirk Michael

Have a cup of tea and a slice of cake whilst you listen to lovely Manx music and singing.

£1 entry fee includes a cup of tea or coffee

~ Cake stall and raffle ~ .

All proceeds go to supporting the Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering Festival for 2025.

More info on the website below

www.celticgathering.im



**CALLUM BREW
PRESENTS:**

**Inside The Mind
Of
Songwriters!!!**

**Charity
Live Music
Event**

DATE: 10 May 2025

VENUE: Black Dog Oven, Peel

Time: 2pm

**ALL
PROCEEDS
GO TO:**



**Other Performers
Include:**

**Mike Wade & Ian Allen
Heikki Koistinen
Theresa McNulty
Jon Lightfield**

And So much more!!



THE SOUND OF MANN

Isle of Man Primary Schools in Concert

Tuesday 17th June 2025

VILLA MARINA ROYAL HALL - 7pm

With support from

**Culture
VANNIN**



PRAYING THE KEEILS

Manx Gaelic choir Caarjyn Coidjagh will be singing at Praying the Keeills on Tuesday 20 May, 6:30pm.

Meet at St John's Methodist Church Hall. Please bring a packed supper. Hot drinks available. Walk to the Royal Chapel, and to garden and wildlife locations around St John's. Music by Caarjyn Coidjagh. Total walk is 4.5 km/3 miles.

Full programme of events: <https://tinyurl.com/275nzsw6>



Have you recently completed any amazing Manx themed art or poetry?

Have you entered the Manx Folk Awards or the Guild?

Have any of your students done any extraordinary community work?

The North American Manx Association (NAMA) is once again presenting awards for outstanding achievement in Manx language, art, music and dance by young people under the age of 18 years on the Isle of Man, along with two additional awards for older recipients, these include a community award.

The awards are arranged in five categories and for each category a silver medal has been minted for presentation to suitable candidates.

- Outstanding achievement in Manx music and/or dance
- Key Stage 3 - 5; Outstanding achievement in Manx Language
- Key Stage 1 & 2; Award for commitment to Manx Language
- Outstanding achievement in Arts and Crafts
- Outstanding contribution to Manx Culture by a student under 18
- Outstanding contribution to Manx Culture by a student over 18
- Outstanding contribution to Manx Culture by a group of young people under 25
- Manx Community Award

Nomination form on www.manxmusic.com

The closing date for nominations is Friday 9th May 2025.

The awards will be held on Thursday 10th July 2-4pm in Douglas

YN CHRUINNAGHT

FÀILT ERRIU
ALL WELCOME!

Celtic

GATHERING

CELTIC MUSIC, SONG & DANCE FESTIVAL
ISLE OF MAN

21 - 27 July / Jerrey Souree 2025

RURA - CALUM STEWART QUARTET - ANNIE BAYLIS BAND
THE MCGOLDRICK FAMILY - SCRAN
TREE NY KIARE - RACHEL HAIR & RON JAPPY - AVANC
THE MEGA MANX CEILI - CELTIC MYTHS & LEGENDS
& MANY MORE ACTS

• CONCERTS • CEILIS
• WORKSHOPS • SESSIONS



Supported by
Culture Vannin . IOM Arts Council . The Fynoderee Distillery
Visit Isle of Man . Digital Group . Culture Ireland



WWW.CELTICGATHERING.IM TEL. 07624 302200



NEW ALBUM FROM TRIP

<https://trip-music.bandcamp.com/album/in-terras-keep>

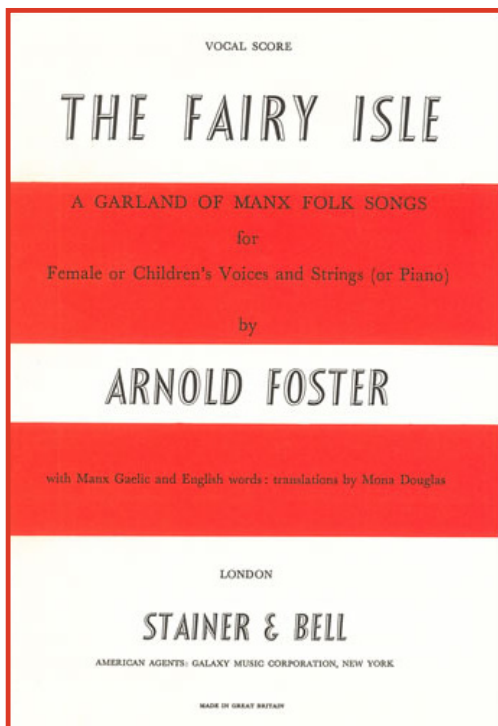
Enjoy this new album from TRIP, featuring Manx fiddle player Isla Callister's original tune, "Laa Luanys", which features on track, August Ascent.



MANX MUSIC FESTIVAL

The delightful fairy-themed programme from CHLOË WOOLLEY & JO CALLISTER earned them the first place in the Open Piano Duet last night [28 April] in the Promenade Suite.

Their chosen programme was the "Overture" from *The Fairy Isle* and "Car ny Ferrishyn" a Manx traditional fairy



dance tune arranged by Arnold Foster and Chloë's father, Frank.

The overture from *The Fairy Isle - A Garland of Manx Folk Songs* is based on "Mannin Veg Veen" and was a piano duet reduction from the string ensemble score composed by English composer Arnold Foster (1898–1962).

<https://stainer.co.uk/shop/d10/>

Download "Car ny Ferrishyn" arranged for piano duet by Frank Woolley for free here:

<https://tinyurl.com/3y757nrm>



Spotify Manx Music Playlist

<https://tinyurl.com/yckzsa79>



Harrish y Cheayn - Across the Sea

Athens Chamber Singers' spring concert

□ *This Fair Isle: Celtic Folksongs and Dances from the Isle of Man* □

arranged for chorus and harp



Saturday, April 26, 2025

4:00pm

Friendship Presbyterian Church

8531 Macon Highway (across from Athens Academy)

Free admission (donations accepted!)

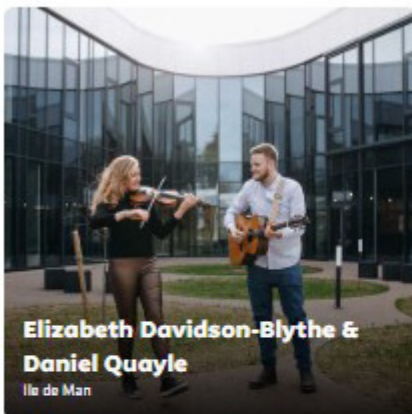
Info: contact director Kevin Kelly (kkelly@uga.edu)

Kevin Kelly recently organised a concert of Manx songs & melodies in Athens, Georgia, USA.

The impressive programme featured Song of Manannan (as a "prelude"), Mannin Veen, As I went out one Morning, Courting song (Arrane sooree), Keep the old petticoat warm, Love of my heart (Graih my Chree), One named Click (Fer ny Clien Click), My brown-haired girl (My Caillin veg dhone), Car Juan Nan (Juan Nan's reel), Arrane Ghelby (Song of Dalby) as a harp solo, the Sea invocation (Geay jeh'n aer), King of the Sea, Spinning song, Grinding song (Arrane ny blieh), Milking song (Arrane Ben-vlieaun), Song of the Fairies (Arrane ny Ferrishyn), Good night song (Arrane Oie-Vie), Slumber song (Arrane Saveenagh) and Sail away (Shiaull Ersooyl).

Great work Kevin and the Athens Chamber Singers!!

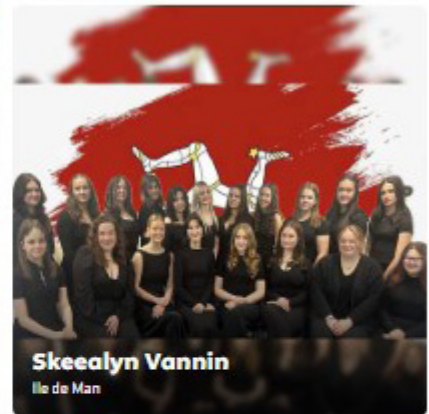
Île de Man



Elizabeth Davidson-Blythe & Daniel Quayle
Île de Man



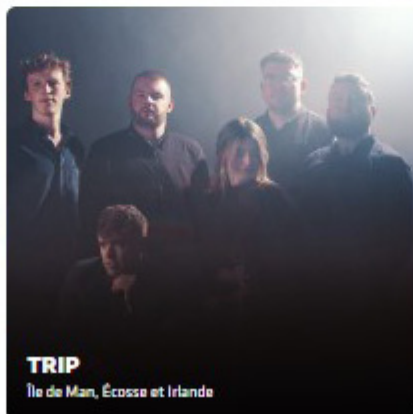
Isla Callister
Île de Man



Skeelyn Vannin
Île de Man



Smooïnaght Mie
Île de Man



TRIP
Île de Man, Écosse et Irlande

Festival Interceltique de Lorient in Brittany (1 - 10 August) has announced this year's line-up! There's a mighty Manx contingent going with Elizabeth & Daniel, Isla Callister, Skeelyn Vannin (Platform Vocal Ensemble), Smooïnaght Mie and TRIP!!
www.festival-interceltique.bzh/

RESEARCH NEWS

An article for *The Manx Independent* (17th April 2025) written by Dr Chloë Woolley, Manx Music Development Officer at Culture Vannin.

Ramsey Town - the Manx favourite sung with gusto island-wide

"Ramsey Town, Ramsey Town. Shinin' by the sea. Here's a health to my true love, Where-so-e'er she be!"

So goes the rousing chorus of a Manx favourite, sung with gusto Island-wide!

"Ramsey Town" was first published in *Manx National Songs* in 1896. The book was the result of a folk song collecting project conducted by William Henry Gill, his brother Deemster John Frederick Gill, and childhood friend, Dr John Clague. Their mission was "to collect and preserve from the oblivion", and over several years they gathered over 250 song melodies from the Manx country folk.



CHARMING PICTURE BY W. H. GILL OF THE COTTAGE IN JURBY
IN WHICH THE TUNE 'RAMSEY TOWN' WAS FOUND.

WH Gill secured a publishing deal with

Boosey & Co. in London – the last in their series of national folk song books. In the same style, Gill attempted to popularise the Manx songs by adding English titles and lyrics, and gentle piano accompaniments. The book was an instant success, soon becoming a staple of Manx singers and members of Manx societies around the world.

But the arrival of the song book was also met with disdain.

One reviewer wrote; "we have never previously met with a more painful instance of the art of the 'improver'... they have utterly and ignominiously failed to attend to the elementary rules which should be observed by collectors..."

Dr Clague and the Gill brothers had not been alone in their endeavours, as Arthur William Moore and his team of aides had also been collecting remnants of a fast-declining song tradition. A "neck-to-neck race" ensued as both books went to print in 1896 – a commercial book versus Moore's antiquarian collection of Gaelic lyrics and translations; *Manx Ballads and Music*. Aware of the impending controversy of its rival, Moore's preface explained that "a prettified Englished presentation" had been avoided in his book!

But the Manx general public loved *Manx National Songs*, and after a few months of its release, a premiere concert was staged in the Grand Theatre, Douglas.

The Cottage is now unfortunately destroyed.

The advert read: *Manx Songs! Manx Dances! Manx Choruses! Manx Scenes in National Costume by the Manx National Choir. Harry Wood's Grand Orchestra.*

It was "was an unqualified success... hundreds had to be refused admission"! In fact, they had to repeat the concert a week later!

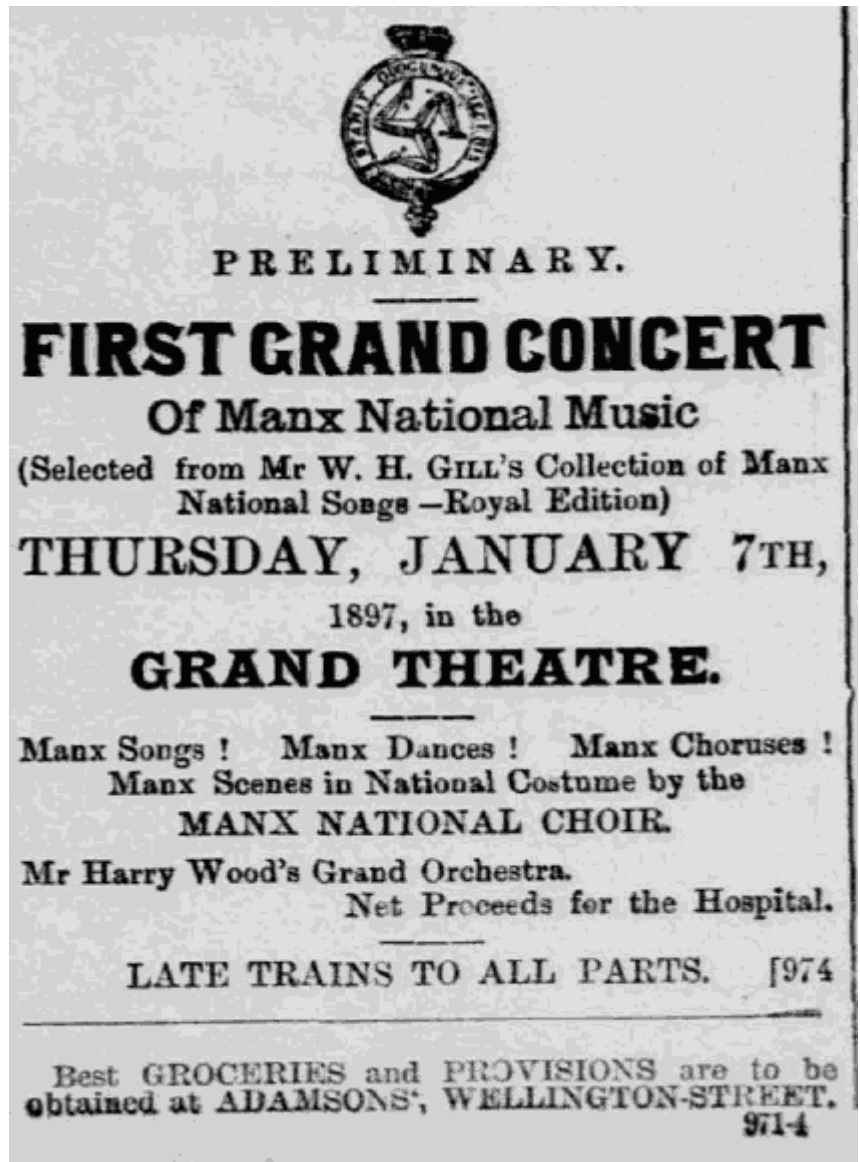
Top of the bill was "Ramsey Town", performed by a 40 strong chorus "all dressed in costumes representing Manx life and character in the old time" - one of the finest songs in the book, according to the Isle of Man Times.

"Ramsey Town" started life as "Twas Once I loved a Lass" - a song which WH Gill collected in Jurby from John Kissack - a meeting which inspired him to sketch the shoemaker's cottage.

^ Photo credit: *Journal of the Manx Museum Vol. III 1935*

New lyrics were penned by Mr E. Crabb and along with The Sheep Under the Snow, The King of the Sea, The Manx Wedding and The Harvest of the Sea, "Ramsey Town" became a national favourite, and, nearly 130 years later, is still performed by children, choirs, brass bands and orchestras!

>> Advert in *The Manx Sun*, Jan 7 1897



PRELIMINARY.

FIRST GRAND CONCERT

Of Manx National Music

(Selected from Mr W. H. GILL's Collection of Manx National Songs - Royal Edition)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7TH,

1897, in the

GRAND THEATRE.

Manx Songs ! Manx Dances ! Manx Choruses !

Manx Scenes in National Costume by the

MANX NATIONAL CHOIR.

Mr Harry Wood's Grand Orchestra.

Net Proceeds for the Hospital.

LATE TRAINS TO ALL PARTS. [974]

Best GROCERIES and PROVISIONS are to be obtained at ADAMSONS', WELLINGTON-STREET. 971-4

LEARN the song: <https://www.manxmusic.com/learn/songs/ramsey-town/>

GRAIH MY CHREE

A Manx Traditional Song

GEORGE BRODERICK

Universität Mannheim

This is a well-known love-song from Manx tradition and is quite commonly sung. A recent example of this is a YouTube film of the song sung by the choir Caarjyn Cooidjagh c.2021 in Peel. It also finds itself in print on four known occasions.

This short note looks at some of the textual errors evident in some renditions of the song and asks whether they result from editorial misunderstanding or from something more relevant?

READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE:

www.manxmusic.com/media/History%20photos/GRAIH%20MY%20CHREE%20by%20George%20Broderick.pdf

THE CONCERT OF MANX MUSIC

AN OVER-FLOW HOUSE.

The concert of Manx music promoted by his Honour Deemster Gill, and held in the Grand Theatre, Douglas, on Thursday evening, was an unqualified success. All the floor space of the building was fully occupied, and hundreds had to be refused admission. The large audience was very appreciative, and his Honour the Deemster, Mr W. H. Gill, and Dr Clague are to be congratulated on the success which has attended their admirable efforts to rescue and keep alive Manx music, some choice specimens of which were heard for the first time by most of those present on Thursday night. The following was the programme:—Chorus, "Ramsey Town" (words by E. Crabb); song, "Wreck of the herring fleet" (words by A. P. Graves), Mr Brockbank; song, "Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey"—The sheep in the snow—(words by Mr W. H. Gill), Miss Phoebe Jull; song, "Gwendolen" (air "Sooree"), Mr J. Wood; chorus "Illiam Dhoan" (carval "Drogh Vraane," words by A. P. Graves); chorus and semi-chorus, "Hunt the wren," Masters R. Cain, W. H. Cain, E. Hannay, E. Hawnt, J. Lawless, and P. Worrall; song, "The Parting Hour" (air, "Ta traah gholl thie," words by A. P. Graves), Miss Turner, for Miss Wood, who was indisposed; song, "A Manx Wedding" (air, "Car-y-Phoossee," words by W. H. Gill), Mr A. M. Proctor; three Manx dances, the orchestra; solo and chorus, "The Rival Cockades," (air, "Tappaghyn Jiargey," words by W. H. Gill); instrumental, a "Skeeyl-y-Vridey," b "Mylecharaine." Orches-

tra; Christmas play, "The White Boys," Messrs J. Kneen, W. Duggan, C. Brown, J. Hardy, and R. Shimmie; song, "O hush thee, my babie," (air, "Arrane ny Clean," Miss Turner; song, "Two Lovers" (carol, words by A. P. Graves), Mr A. M. Proctor; Hollantide song, "Hop tu naa," Messrs G. E. Kelly, S. Christian, and W. Tipping; song, "Lament of the Duchess of Gloucester," (words by A. P. Graves), Mrs Corlett; song, "We'd better wait a while," (air, "My grah nagh share dyn farraghtyn?" words by E. Crabb), Miss Phoebe Jull; solo and chorus, "The King of the Sea," (air "Yn Colbagh breck er sthrap," words by Deemster Gill), Mr A. M. Proctor; chorus, "The Harvest of the Sea," (hymn, air "Eaisht oo as Clashtyn," words by W. H. Gill).

The choruses were the best features of the evening's entertainment. They were accompanied by Mr Harry Wood's orchestra, the services of which excellent body of musicians can hardly be over-estimated. The chorus consisted of some 40 ladies and gentlemen, all dressed in costumes representing Manx life and character in the old time. The ladies wore short and various coloured plaid skirts and bodices, and check and white aprons, low shoes; some wore bonnets with white frilled caps, and others hoods of the orthodox shape; and the effect of the whole, backed by some capital and appropriate local scenery and acting was really fine, and delighted the audience beyond measure. "Ramsey Town," and Deemster Gill's "The King of the Sea," were the best of the choruses. The refrain of the last-named ran—

Oh! the herring, boys, the herring,
Oh! the herring, boys, for me!
Red or kipper'd, fresh or pickled,
Oh! the herring is king of the sea.

The other pieces in character, "Hunt the Wren," "The White Boys," and "Hop tu Naa," were also creditably performed, the acting being capital. These pieces were materially helped out by the appropriate scenery, and by the accompaniments of the orchestra. Mr A. M. Proctor was very happy in his songs, "The Manx Wedding" being particularly well rendered. Mr Brockbank's and Mr Wood's songs were also well given. Miss Jull's best attempt was "Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey," which is a melodious piece of music. Miss Turner's songs were given very pleasingly, but the music allotted to her was of a very plaintive character. Mrs Corlett was in capital voice in her song. Mr W. Gill's hymn, "The Harvest of the Sea," was nicely rendered by the chorus, the audience standing the while. The words are elegantly composed, and the poem is worthy of a place in any collection of hymns. The melody is also one which is likely to become popular.

Taken altogether, the concert was one in which all who took part may take to themselves much credit, and we are glad to see so much interest evinced in what was in great danger of being entirely lost—Manx music. There were some 84 ladies and gentlemen engaged on the stage, and among that number, only about 40 can really be considered natives of the Isle of Man. We do not wish to infer that the concert suffered on that account, but it seems a pity that more Manx musical people—there is no lack of them—were not engaged in the affair.

The stage manager was Mr Fred D. Johnson, whose duties were heavy, but he came off with flying colours. Mr Harry Wood was the musical conductor, and his efforts, and those of the orchestra were a veritable triumph. The leader of the orchestra was Mr J. E. Quayle, and Miss Eveleen Wood presided at the pianoforte.

The concert will be repeated on Thursday evening next. Tickets purchased for last Thursday's concert will be available for the one to be held next week, and these, we think, should be reserved free of cost.

<https://imuseum.im/>

Collector. I.M.Killip.

Miss Elsie Boyde, The Corrin Memorial Home Peel

Her people were the Cains of the Bishop's Desmesne in Ballaugh. For a short time they lived out in the old house that used to be the school at Tholt e Will, and her mother taught embroidery to some of the children round about. She explained the origin of the Boyde name in the Island, and says there is something about it in the Museum Journal, and that she is of the same stock.

Version of the song Ushag veg Ruy

Her mother taught her the song when she was a child and had been taught it by her mother, and there were one or two additional verses which do not appear in the published version.

as well as one or two slight differences, such as y riyer in the line C'raad chaddil ou riyer 'syn Oie ?. In Miss Boyde's version it went C'raad chaddil ou y riyer ?. without 'syn oie as far as I recollect. The first lines of the two additional verses, which are repeated throughout the verse were

Chaddil mish riyer er baare y banglane On the tip of the branch
and

Chaddil mish riyer er baare y froaich. - on the tip of the heather
Miss Boyde said she might record the song as she knew it some time. The notation was also slightly different.

EFDSS are delighted to announce that this year's conference, Traditional Tunes and Popular Airs (TPA), will take place at Cecil Sharp House, London, on Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 November 2025.

TPA conferences aim to bring together researchers working on 'traditional' and 'popular' tunes as transmitted and transformed in all manner of musical styles and genres, performance contexts, levels of society, historical periods, and geographical locations.

Proposals are invited for presentations (20 minutes + 10 minutes for discussion) on any aspect of the topic. We welcome a broad range of approaches, including historical research and ethnographic studies to illuminate melodic interrelationships. Relevant areas include music for performative dance (such as morris, sword, clog and other forms of step and percussive dance, Scottish, Irish and Welsh dance) and participatory dance (social, country, ceilidh/ceili), instrumental music, ballad operas and theatrical works, religious music, broadside balladry, minstrelsy, music hall, the pleasure gardens, domestic music-making, national and folk music, and children's songs.

MORE DETAILS: <https://tinyurl.com/3xfkdn5n>

The Leighton Stowell Cup for Folk Dancing

***Awarded by the Guild to the group gaining
highest marks in Classes FD1 to FD5***

1962 Onchan School
 1963 Caledonian Society, Scottish
 Country Dancing Club
 1964 Ballacashtal Dancers, Castletown
 1965 Ballacashtal Dancers, Castletown
 1966 Onchan School
 1967 Laxey School
 1968 Laxey School
 1969 Ballacashtal Dancers, Castletown
 1970 Tynwald St. Girls' School
 1971 Tynwald St. Girls' School
 1972 Tynwald St. Girls' School
 1973 Tynwald St. Girls' School
 1974 Dhoon School
 1975 Ballasalla School
 1976 Ballasalla School
 1977 Onchan School
 1978 Fairfield Junior School
 1979 Peel Clothworkers School
 1980 Fairfield Junior School
 1981 Victoria Road School, Castletown
 1982 Fairfield Junior School
 1983 Buchan School
 1984 Victorian Road School
 1985 Buchan School
 1986 Murrays Road School
 1987 Buchan School
 1988 Buchan School
 1989 Ballasalla School
 1990 Ballakermeen High School
 1991 Lane dy Vree
 1992 ?
 1993 Onchan
 1994 Perree Bane
 1995 Perree Bane
 1996 Onchan
 1997 Perree Bane



1998 Perree Bane
 1999 M.F.D.S. Juniors
 2000 St. John's School
 2001 Onchan School
 2002 Perree Bane
 2003 Perree Bane
 2004 Onchan School
 2005 Perree Bane
 2006 M.F.D.S. Juniors
 2007 Perree Bane
 2008 Perree Bane
 2009 Perree Bane
 2010 Perree Bane
 2011 Perree Bane
 2012 Scoill Phurt Le Moirrey
 2013 Arbory School
 2014 Onchan School
 2015 Sharon Rye School of Dance
 2016 Arbory School
 2017 Sharon Rye School of Dance
 2018 Arbory School
 2019 Perree Bane
 2020 -
 2021 -
 2022 Perree Bane
 2023 Skeddan Jiarg
 2024 Perree Bane
 2025 Skeddan Jiarg

Guild 2025 syllabus: [Manx-Music-Festival-2025-Syllabus-v2.pdf](https://www.manxmusic.com/history/biographies/leighton-stowell-philip-1897-1978/)

Leighton Stowell biog: www.manxmusic.com/history/biographies/leighton-stowell-philip-1897-1978/

Miss M. L. Wood and Tonic Sol-fa

by Maurice Powell

Tonic Sol-fa is a system designed to teach sight-singing and was invented by Sarah Anna Glover, a Norwich school teacher, from 1812 and published in her *Manual of the Norwich Sol-fa System* in 1845. The system was further developed by the Reverend John Curwen who published his *Standard Course of Lessons on the Tonic Sol-fa Method of Teaching to Sing* in 1858 and in 1872 the periodical the *Tonic Sol-fa Reporter and Magazine of Vocal Music for the People*. Curwen opened his Tonic Sol-Fa College in 1879 and his system - 'Easy, Cheap and True' - was widely adopted and in common use throughout Britain and the Empire by 1900 as an easily accessible method for the teaching of reading music at sight. The most positive result of the system was that it enabled working class people in Britain to become musically literate and fully able to participate in their local choral societies. It was still in use after World War II but has virtually died out today.

'I would like to like to make sight-singing compulsory for admission to choral societies.'

Miss M. L. Wood moved to the Isle of Man in 1857 and may have first heard of the Tonic Sol-fa system in January 1867 when Mr. Samuel McBurney advertised 'A Course of Lessons in Vocal Music on the Tonic Sol-fa Method' at St. James's Hall, Douglas. McBurney was the eldest son of Dr. Samuel McBurney, the Principal of the Atholl Academy and taught a vocal music class there. In December 1867 the *Manx Sun* was present at the presentation of 'a handsome music stand' to Mr. McBurney in recognition of his services to the class; however, in acknowledging the gift he regretted that 'justice had not been done to the class . . . or to the system in Douglas.' This state of affairs would not last long.

We first hear of Miss Wood* and the Tonic Sol-fa system in connection with the Douglas Singing Class in a report in the *Isle of Man Times* of 15th May 1869 when she was presented with a silver biscuit canister and an ink stand by members of the class and gratefully accepted the gifts 'in remembrance of the very pleasant evenings spent with you last winter.' The classes commenced again on a very wet evening in September 1869 in the Lower Schoolroom, Athol Street, with both Elementary and Advanced Classes being offered. The aim of the classes was 'to develop and cultivate a taste for music amongst the young people of our town', although some proof of knowledge of music was required for those wishing to apply for the Advanced Class. One hundred and two people were present at the first meeting of the new term but it was envisaged that the numbers would rise and perhaps surpass the first season's 'muster' of one hundred and fifty members. Indeed, a concert given by the Douglas Singing Class of one hundred and fifty voices took place at the Industrial Home for Destitute Children in February 1870 consisting of songs, part songs and piano solos, and yielded a profit of £31 2s 3d.

* 'The Mother of Manx Music' (1839-1925), choir trainer, conductor, composer and arranger, and a pioneering founder of the Manx Music Festival in 1892.

'An admirable system . . . a thorough grounding.'

In October 1875 a two-hour lecture entitled 'Singing for Schools, Congregations and Families' advocating the Tonic Sol-fa System was given by Mr. Robert Griffiths of London* in St. James Hall and was attended 'by a most respectable and attentive audience'. Griffiths believed that it was 'easier to teach a child to read music than to read an ordinary book' and developed his advocacy of the system by demonstrating a series of exercises 'which the audience took up in a most intelligent manner'. He concluded by recommending the study of music reading under the guidance of Miss Wood when they would eventually read a piece of music as easily as a newspaper.' A singing class for mixed voices commenced at the National Schoolroom, Peel in November 1875 and its members reinforced the choir of St. Peter's Church for the Christmas Service that year.

* The Secretary of the London Tonic Sol-fa College from 1865 until 1900. Griffiths was the guest of Miss M. L. Wood and gave illustrated lectures in Douglas, Peel, Ramsey and Castletown.

The *Mona's Herald* of 20th February 1878 published a letter from Miss Wood, together with an extract from the *Curwen's Tonic Solfa Reporter* extolling the virtues of men's voices, in the hope that more young Manxmen would enroll in the singing classes. The fourteenth season of the Douglas Singing Class commenced on Monday evenings from 2nd October 1882 at the Masonic Hall, Loch Promenade with fees of 5s for twenty-four lessons for the Elementary Class plus 6d for the music, and 2s 6d per quarter for the Advanced Class held on Thursday evenings.

Miss Wood will have been delighted to read in the *Mona's Herald* of 8th November 1882, extracts from a letter from Dr. John Stainer, the organist of Magdalen College, Oxford (1860) and St. Paul's Cathedral (1872) and the future renowned composer of the popular Passion Oratorio *The Crucifixion* (1887), in which he praised the Tonic Sol-fa system as 'invaluable as a logical and philosophical method of teaching singing (that) will assuredly add to it a knowledge of the staff (stave)'. For 'would-be singers . . . for whom the staff presents special difficulties . . . the system removes these difficulties.' He concluded: 'For elementary schools, rural choirs and persons generally who have no time to devote to an instrument, I consider the Tonic Sol-fa the best possible system'. *

* The Tonic-Sol-fa system was never intended for instrumentalists, but for potential singers 'whom it would be absurd to attempt to reach by the Staff Notation.' It was considered a success if 'village boys could learn to sing hymn tunes at sight.' *Mona's Herald*, 08.11.1882.

Miss M. L. Wood was the most passionate advocate of teaching people to read music at sight and her singing classes became fundamental in the development of the Island's choirs in the two decades before the inauguration of the Manx Music Festival. She remained loyal to the Tonic Sol-fa system throughout her life and the testament to this is the sheer number of choral classes that have been the mainstay of the Manx Music Festival since its inauguration.

Andreas, April 2025

TRANSCRIPTION OF THE MONTH

see www.manxmusic.com for more printable pieces of Manx music

CORAACHYN YN AILE VOICES OF THE FIRE

Shee Erriu

Peace be with you


Oie Voaldyn

John Bowker

5

The musical score is for a four-part setting of 'Shee Erriu'. It is written in 4/4 time and consists of two systems of four staves each. The staves are labeled Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The lyrics are 'She - e err - - iu' repeated twice in each system. The notation includes quarter notes, half notes, and whole notes, with some notes beamed together. The first system ends with a double bar line, and the second system begins with a measure rest for five measures before the first note.

'Shee Erriu' is 'Blessing of Peace' in the Manx language, part of the collection of chants, written especially for the Oie Voaldyn festival by the internationally renowned John Bowker.

The singing will be led by the singing group 'Voices of the Fire' which was formed in February 2020 to learn the chants and bring the music alive on the shore, as part of this event. We are hoping to grow this group so community voices singing in harmony can become an intrinsic and embedded part of Oie Voaldyn. If you would like to get involved in the choir in the future put your details on www.oievoaldyn.com get involved or join the Facebook Group  Voices of the Fire."

CALENDAR

MAY

26 April – 3 May The Manx Music, Speech & Dance festival [Guild]

www.manxmusicfestival.org/

1 - 4 Mec Lir & Elizabeth Davidson-Blythe and Daniel Quayle at Shetland Folk Festival
www.shetlandfolkfestival.com/

4 Oie Voaldyn, Peel

<https://oievoaldyn.com/>

10 Yn Chruinnaght Kiaull as Caffee – Coffee Morning, Ebenezer Hall, Kirk Michael, 10am – 12pm £1

10 Inside the Mind of Songwriters, in aid of Isle Listen, Black Dog Oven, 2pm

17 Isle of Man Symphony Orchestra concert, Villa Marina, 7.30pm

22 Mec Lir at Orkney Folk Festival

<https://orkneyfolkfestival.com/>

JUNE

17 The Sound of Mann, Villa Marina, 7pm

21 Laa Jannoo Kiaull / Make Music Day

27 Laa Columb www.laacolumbkilley.org/

JULY

7 Tynwald Day

21 – 27 Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering
www.celticgathering.im

24 - 27 Elizabeth Davidson-Blythe and Daniel Quayle at Viljandi Folk Music Festival, Estonia

AUGUST

1 – 10 Festival Interceltique de Lorient

SEPTEMBER

23 European Folk Day

<https://www.europeanfolkday.eu/>

Please send in dates so that we can publicise events here & online:

www.manxmusic.com & keep in touch at

www.facebook.com/groups/manxmusicanddance

~ SESSIONS ~

MON 8pm Trad session at The George Hotel, Castletown

TUES 8pm Singaround at The Manor, Douglas

WED 8.30pm Trad Session at O'Donnell's, Douglas

THURS 8pm Singing session at R.A.O.B. (Buffs) Club, Ramsey

FRI 8.30pm Trad session at The Mitre, Ramsey

Last **FRI** of month 9pm, Kiaull as Gaelg, Albert, Port St Mary

Each **SUN** 12.30-4 Trad session:

1st Sunday of Month Laxey Sailing Club

2nd Sunday – Douglas Venue

3rd Sunday – Blackdog Oven, Peel

4th Sunday Woodbourne Pub, Douglas – Slow session 4pm – 6pm

Stay up to date: www.facebook.com/TradMusicWeekendIsleofMan

~ SESSIONS ~

culture vannin

For information on Manx music & dance contact:

Manx Music Development Officer **Dr Chloë Woolley:**

manxmusic@culturevannin.im

www.manxmusic.com

Music office: 01624 694758 / Culture Vannin, PO Box 1986, Douglas, Isle of Man IM99 1SR

Written and edited by Chloë Woolley for Culture Vannin

The Editor welcomes submissions but reserves the right to edit for style and space

PRESS: please feel free to pick up articles without named authors to spread the word about Manx culture

MANX MUSIC 100% LOCAL