

‘...while the others did some capers’:  
the Manx Traditional Dance revival  
1929 to 1960



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## **'...while the others did some capers': The Manx Traditional Dance Revival 1929 to 1960**

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# **Preliminary Information**

## **0.1 List of Abbreviations**

EFDS	English Folk Dance Society
EFDSS	English Folk Dance & Song Society
EFSS	English Folk Song Society
JEFDS	Journal of the English Folk Dance Society
JEFDSS	Journal of the English Folk Dance & Song Society
JEFSS	Journal of the English Folk Song Society
JMM	Journal of the Manx Museum
MFDS	Manx Folk Dance Society
MNHL	Manx National Heritage Library
MSS	Manuscript

## **0.2 A Note on Referencing**

Much of the material used for this dissertation is taken from the manuscript collections of Philip Leighton Stowell and Mona Douglas held in the Manx National Heritage Library. Stowell's material is contained in one archive box, although Douglas' spans 33 mixed boxes of material. As the material in each box is a mixture of typed, manuscript and printed material, much of this only fragments. If this material is referred to in the text it will be denoted by the letters MNHL then the accession number of that particular source and, where relevant, followed by the Box number, all held within rounded parentheses e.g. (MNHL 9545 Box 5) means that the fragment or manuscript referred to can be found in the Manx National Heritage Library, Box 5 of deposit with accession number 9545.

In the case of Stowell's material there is only one box, so box number will not be necessary.

One particular document may confuse referencing and so will be explained here. Douglas was the editor of a journal by the name of *Manninagh*. An article in this journal was composed by Stowell, although only the first part of the article was published. The complete manuscript to the article can be found in Douglas' notes in Stowell's hand. As a result, any reference to the published portion of the article will be attributed to Stowell and referenced as published in *Manninagh*. Any reference to the second portion will be attributed to Stowell and noted as part of Douglas' notes stating the box number.

### **0.3 Names of Dances**

Due to the nature of Manx dances many of them share similar names or their names alter over time. As a result this dissertation will, in the main, use the names and spellings now commonly associated with the dance to aid ease of reading. However, in many quotes and descriptions the alternative names and spellings will need to be used. To avoid confusion the common names of these dances will be listed below, along side alternative names for easy cross-referencing.

Flitter Dance	Flitter Daunse, Flitter Daunsey.
Hunt the Wren	Helg yn Dreean, Shelg yn Dreean.
Peter O'Tavy	Car ny Phoosee.
Chyndaa yn Bwoailley	Hyndaa yn Bwoailley, the Courting Dance.
Eunysagh Vona	Eunyssagh Vona, Mona's Delight.
Illiam y Thaelhear	Tom Tailor, Thobm y Thaelher.
Jem as Nancy	Jemmy as Nancy.
Fathaby Jig	Cur Shaghey yn Geurey.
Car ny Ferrishyn	Daunse ny Ferrishyn, Fairy Reel.
Yn Guilley Hesheree	The Ploughboy.
Dirk Dance	Reeaghyn dy Vannin, The Sword Dance, The Kirk Maughold Sword Dance of the Kings of Mann, The Sword Dance of the Kings of Mann.
Men's Jig	Cum yn Chenn Oanrey Cheh, the Jig, Keep the Old Petticoat Warm.
Mylecharane's March	Cutting off the Fiddler's Head, Roie Pherick, Run Patrick, Stick Dance.
Bwoill Baccagh	Frog Dance.

Salmon Leap	Lhiem y Braddan.
White Boy's	Rinkey ny Ghuilleyn Baney.
Daunse ny Moain	Turf Dance, Cutting the Turf.
Girl's Jig	Manx Jig, the Jig, Cum yn Chenn Oanrey Cheh, Keep the Old Petticoat Warm.
Dance for Three	Daunse son Troor.
Gorse Sticks	Brasnagyn Aittin

## **0.4 List of Illustrations**

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Methodology

**Manx Dancing:** The Sword Dance is an ancient ritualistic Manx dance. As with Manx music, one can see the Irish Scottish and Welsh influences, yet they remain defiantly Manx!

([www.celticnationsworld.com/Culture\\_celtic\\_dance.htm](http://www.celticnationsworld.com/Culture_celtic_dance.htm))

This quote appears on a website titled 'Celtic Nations World'. Typical of many Celtic websites, this site purports to be a central information base for all of the Celtic countries, with the flags of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Galicia, Brittany and the Isle of Man emblazoned above every page. When the words 'Manx Dance' are entered into Google, a commonly used search engine, this site appears in the top few choices. But is the information given above true? The Sword Dance is singled out, although this dance is only performed once a year by one man, so why does the site not mention any of the other dances; those now popular with all of the Manx dance groups and which are performed at every Manx cultural event on the Island? While Manx dance does have some very obvious similarities with Irish, Scottish and Welsh dancing is it true to single them out as influences? And if so, why were Manx dances not influenced by England, as it is geographically as close as the three Celtic countries mentioned? Furthermore, if the dances are influenced by outside cultures, why and how do they 'remain defiantly Manx'? The tone of the last remark implies that the dances are in some way having to assert their identity in the face of some disbelief as to their origins. All of the above queries lead to one over-arching question that must be answered in order to understand the quote on the website; where do Manx dances come from? It is this question that lies at the heart of this study.

There have been many essays, dissertations, theses and books written on the origins, revival and development of Manx music. Fenella Bazin's seminal work *Manx Music before 1896* (1995) begins almost with the birth of history and covers Manx musical history, both sacred and secular until the end of the nineteenth century. Other scholars have written specifically on the collection of Manx music, on manuscripts of instrumental and choral music and on the popular music of the music halls and ballrooms. The more modern period has also been studied with works on the cultural revival of the 1970s and the biographies of individuals involved with it and studies on the history of the recording of Manx music and the fiddle traditions of the Isle of Man. What is surprising is that very little has been written on the corresponding, and in many ways symbiotic, dance form now popularly termed 'traditional' on the Isle of Man. It is evident, however, that Manx dance has irrevocably influenced and shaped the history of Manx music, at least in the period since the recent revival. Dance tunes have developed in line with the dancers' requirements, many musicians begin their career playing for dance and ceili groups and individual dance groups have formed a canon of music

around their dance repertoires. So why has so little been written on the Manx dance tradition? One of the most recent essays on Manx dance, and one of the only composed by a third party is 'The Revival and Reconstruction of Manx Traditional Dance' by Bob Carswell (2004), himself a dancer, musician and scholar. The 2000 seminar day 'Completed and Restored to Use' focussed on the revival of Manx tradition and folklore during the twentieth century. Carswell's paper on the Manx dance revival remarked:

Overall my belief is that Mona Douglas did find fragments. However, we know that the way in which the fragments were developed and linked was initially the work of Mona [Douglas] and Philip Leighton Stowell, with the practical assistance of the team of dancers from Albert Road School in Ramsey. As present the proportion of fragments within the body of work is not known, but working through Mona's papers may yet turn up some clues.

(Carswell: 2004, p.15)

Whilst the basic history of the dances was known, mainly from essays and papers published by Mona Douglas and Philip Leighton Stowell, word of mouth and a little theorising, the vital primary sources of the Manx dance collection, reconstruction and revival were not available. Since the writing of Carswell's paper, Mona Douglas' personal papers have been made available. Contained in 33 archive boxes, all of the material bequeathed to the Manx Museum and Manx National Heritage Library have been sorted through and accessioned. It is this invaluable resource that shapes this study. The papers of Philip Leighton Stowell and all available published material and tertiary resources have also been used. Beginning with the collection of the dances, this study will follow the history of the popularisation, publication and development of Manx dancing until just before the recent revival of Manx culture in the 1970s. This point has been chosen as an end point to the study as it is the beginning of a whole new chapter in the development of the Manx dance tradition. A doctoral study has been completed by Woolley (2003) on the 1970s revival and so includes the formation of the dance groups and development of the national '*Yn Chruinnagh*' festival. Moreover, as many of the participants in the revival of the 1970s are still involved with Manx music, dance and festivals and most still reside on the Isle of Man, a study on the more recent developments of Manx dance would require a more ethnological approach, something beyond the scope of this study.

This study does not take an ethnochoreological approach. Instead, it concentrates on the textual resources of Manx dances and the historical contexts within which these texts were employed rather than the physical movements of Manx dancers or the sub-textual intentions of these movements.

It would seem obvious to approach this as the study of a revival. However, while the revival of the 1970s was a pan-cultural revival, encompassing music, dance, language, customs etc. the period covered by this study does not appear to correlate to any complementary or related art forms. In some ways peculiarly, the resurgence of dance was not related to any

heightened interest in music. Music indigenous to the Isle of Man had been collected during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by Mssrs. Gill, Gill, Clague and Moore and the bulk of these findings had been published by 1898, nearly forty years before the first publication of Manx dances. The dance revival certainly drew on the music collected at this period, but the two events appear generally exclusive. As a result, models for the revival of traditional musics do not sit comfortably with the events of the mid-twentieth century on the Isle of Man. As music and song are so inextricably linked, the intent of such revivals often centres around language stored in song and the simple melodies and ideals attached to them. Dances are generally abstract entities, and while many of them do now conjure images of a more idyllic and utopian existence, they are rarely as simple to perform or collect as songs and are often of limited appeal, as they require more specific physical abilities. Whilst many of the revival models used by Woolley to discuss the movement of the 1970s may be applicable to the dance revival of the mid-century period, they present a number of problems and are therefore not of particular use here. No models developed specifically for dance revivals could be found.

This study will instead approach the dance revival as the formation of a canon as outlined in Bohlman's seminal work *The Study of Folk Music in the Western World* (1988). Although a text primarily concerned with musical canons, the study of the relationship between text and context is ideally suited to this study and allows the material to be analysed in a way not restricted by the search for agenda and concepts of authenticity and artefact. Bohlman defines a folk music canon as:

Those repertoires and forms of musical behaviour constantly shaped by a community to express its cultural particularity and the characteristics that distinguish it as a social entity. Because the social basis of a community is continuously in flux, the folk music canon is always in the process of forming and of responding creatively to new texts and changing contexts.

(Bohlman: 1988, p.104)

While the term revival implies the resuscitation of something 'dead' and its subsequent return to popularity, the study of Manx dance as a canon allows the period in question to stand within a wider framework of flux and changing context which in turn allows a seamless move into the new context of the 1970s cultural revival. Canons, according to Bohlman, are dependent on the choices of a community or group and not necessarily of an individual or small elite. This allows any agenda to be muted as it is up to the community which the canon represents to decide what is and what is not accepted based on their aesthetic decisions, and not, necessarily, on any personal or political agenda.

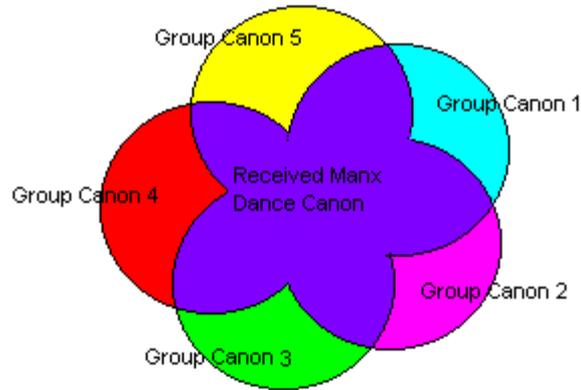
As socially motivated choices, a community's canon bear witness to its values and provides a critical construct for understanding the ways the community sorts out its own musical activities and repertoires. The anchoring of folk music canons in community values depends, furthermore, on the music and musical activities during

its past and the way these bear on the present. Folk music canons therefore articulate cultural values both diachronically and synchronically.

(Bohlman: 1988, p.105)

Using Bohlman's model of a folk music canon to discuss a folk dance canon allows a critical discussion of not just the text and immediate context, but also the wider context of the community surrounding the canon, in relation to the chronological implications. In particular the potential for self-criticism afforded to the author in using this model is vital. It allows an in-depth examination of the political and ideological abuse of past and present incarnations of the canon forming community. This is particularly important for the study and discovery of what Bohlman describes as 'pseudo canons', which may have caused a misinterpretation of context and so adversely affected the study of an otherwise rich source of cultural material. This is particularly important as much of the modern day received canon of Manx dances has been created by a community with little or no access to the original source material and with a sufficiently broad temporal dislocation from the original canon-forming events to induce a possible skewing of contemporary aesthetic and value based decisions.

This study, then, will concentrate on the received canon of the modern community of Manx dancers. These are embodied within two publications: *The Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances* (1981) and *Rinkaghyn Vannin* (1983). These texts were created by two separate communities and the development of the material held within them as well as the context for their development and the development of these communities will be explored. Within the received Manx dance canon, however, each dance group has its own repertoire of dances. These form separate canons of recently composed and aesthetically preferred dances specific to the decisions and consensuses drawn by each community surrounding each dance group. These overlapping canons do provide a central core, based predominantly in the two aforementioned texts. Put simply, then, newly composed dances will not be included in this study as they do not form part of the central repertoire and in the main fall outside of this time period. As a result, a decision needed to be made with regard to one particular dance; 'Dance for Five', which was composed by Bob Carswell but was included in the publication *Rinkaghyn Vannin*. As the publication clearly states that this dance was a recent composition and it does not fall within the main canon of dances received as traditional dance it has not been discussed in this study. Some dances that have not been published are discussed, but only by virtue of their development during the period in question and subsequent rejection as part of the canon forming process.



### 1.1.1 The overlapping of individual modern group canons to form a common 'received' canon of Manx dances.

## 1.2 Dancing on the Isle of Man in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

There are a few references to Manx dance before 1900, but still more than many might think. A survey of the newspapers of the Isle of Man reveals that dance was an important part of everyday life. Moreover, it is unsurprising to find that the dance habits of the Manx were not unlike those of the nations that flank the island. Unfortunately, as any dance historian will know, dance is rarely written down in the same way as music or poetry, as the notation of dance is famously difficult. Descriptions of dances are often either by recognised name or utilise the vaguest of terms such as 'leaping', 'jigging' and 'capering'.

The first concrete reference to dance on the Isle of Man comes surprisingly early, in the musings of Waldron during his tour of the Isle of Man in 1726 (Waldron: 1865). The reference is confusing to say the least as it does not at any point mention the dance being performed on the Isle of Man or being in any way related to Manx folklore or practice. The dance in question is a well-known English dance titled 'The Black and the Grey'. The tune to this dance appears in myriad British manuscripts of folk song of the era. It is worth noting, however, that the tune to 'The Black and the Grey' appears within the common repertoire of modern Manx traditional music as collected by Clague and Gill.

The earliest source referring to Manx traditional dance as it is recognised today comes from Thomas Quayle in 1812 in his treatise on the agriculture of the Isle of Man (Miller: 2005). The dance in question is one now associated with the Mheillea or harvest celebrations.

The Manks [sic] peasantry being much attached to dancing, it is a constant practice on the evening of the day on which the last corn is cut, for the farmer to call in a fiddler or two. Laborers, young and old, then assemble; and often the family and friends of the farmer himself join in the merry dance. The reason of fixing the period of this festivity, which is called the *mellow* [mheillea], not at harvest home, but on the day when the last corn is cut, is probably because the females' share of the labour then ceases and they disperse. During the dance, a diminutive sheaf, formed of the

last cut corn, bound with ribbands, which has been borne in procession from the field by the queen of the mellow, passes from hand to hand among the young women, and in dancing is waved above the head. English country dances are still unknown to them. Jigs and reels, in which four or five couples join, take their place, the fiddler changing his tune, and often playing one of the few national lively airs, preserved from early times, resembling strongly in character the Irish.

(p.17)

The quote could be a description of the dance as it performed today, and it is interesting to note that the author specifically points out that English country dances were not *yet* known on the Isle of Man, as if even at this early time the dances of the English were in some way spreading to other places. The reference to similarities between Manx and Irish dancing and music are particularly interesting, as much has been written on the dance of Ireland during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sadly, however, there is no mention of the steps or figures relating to this dance, and so although we know that dancing was a part of the Mheillea celebrations, there is no way of verifying exactly which dances were appropriate, if in fact it is the case that specific dances relate to specific celebrations.



By kind permission of Manx National Heritage.

**1.2.1 A modern representation of the Mheillea celebrations with corn sheaf baby or 'babban mheillea' being presented to the Queen of the Mheillea as described above (MNHL 9545).**

Another early reference to dancing on the Isle of Man comes from a very different situation, namely that of the entertainments of the nobility. In the diary of Isabella Curwen Goldie of the Nunnery, Douglas, an entry from 1822 mentions the use of country dances and quadrilles at a great ball held at Kirby. What is exactly meant by this is not evident. Whether the term

country dance was being used to describe an English country dance, or just any simple dance for a group of people is not clear, but the term quadrille is a common form of dance for eight people. These dances then went on to become the square dances of America and were common in Ireland at the time. However, as they were known to have originated in Europe, with the development of 'An Coimisiun le Rinci Gaelacha' in 1929 and the rigid restrictions put upon the definition of traditional dance and the rejection of anything known to have originated outside of Ireland, these dances were originally rejected. It was only in the 1980s that many dancers sought to perform them again, as they were an important part of their dance heritage. Many of these quadrilles now go to make up part of the 'Set Dancing' repertoire (Friel: 2004). Set dances are dances for four couples, usually with a number of discrete figures each sharing a common opening figure. On the Isle of Man it is evident from the music of the early nineteenth century manuscripts that quadrilles were executed not only at great balls, but also at local and village events such as church dinners, fairs and family celebrations (Curtis: 2002).

Not only was the Isle of Man influenced in its dance forms by England and Ireland, but Scottish dances were also known on the Isle of Man in the early nineteenth century. Gill's *Manx Scrapbook* (1929) quotes an article on the abolition of 'penance' within the church structure. Reportedly, at some point between 1827 and 1838, penitents that had been placed in the church for some religious crime or other were seen to pass the time by dancing 'Scotch Reels.' It is apparent from this that these 'foreign' dances were not restricted to the assembly rooms and balls, but were known to the general populace of the Isle of Man and were popular enough to warrant their employment to while away the time and not just kept for special or court occasions.

Another tradition known to modern Manx dancers is the Christmas tradition of 'Hunt the Wren'. This tradition bears similarities to those in Ireland and Scotland and has many facets, including song, dance, music and ritual. Train's historical account of the Isle of Man in 1845 describes this ritual:

Hunting the wren...After making the usual circuit, and collecting all the money they could obtain, they laid the wren on a bier and carried it, in procession, to the parish church-yard, where, with a whimsical kind of solemnity, they made a grave, buried it and sung dirges over it in the Manks language, which they called her knell. After the obsequies were performed, the company, outside the church-yard wall, formed a circle and danced to music which they had provided for the occasion.

(Miller: 2005, p.44)

Frustratingly, once again, the actual figures and steps of the dance are omitted, nonetheless it shows that Manx dances were performed in conjunction with rituals relating to folklore and custom and that circular dances were also used, as well as country dance, quadrilles and Scotch reels.

There is little reference to be found in the mid-nineteenth century. The reason for this is unknown, but it is possible that the political climate of the time left writers concentrating on other subjects or that, as the dance of the early century had been documented, the continuation of this was not deemed news-worthy. It may, of course, simply be that we have not yet found them.

In 1885 an advert for a dancing master was placed in the *Isle of Man Evening Examiner*. Mr Paton, a dancing master of unknown origin (although his surname is not one common to the Isle of Man) was teaching a number of dances including the 'Valse a Deux Temps', the 'Valse a Troi Temps', the 'Valse Cellarino', 'La Redowa' and the 'Valse Mazurka Quadrille'. Evidently the waltz was in fashion at this period and the quadrille was still popular. It would seem reasonable to surmise that, as the dances referred to were performed on the Isle of Man, and the style in which they were executed was similar to the Irish, the way in which the dancing masters would operate would resemble Ireland. Dancing masters in Ireland were often itinerant specialists in the new and most fashionable dances and would travel to an area for a period of time and offer lessons to local people in the newest dance figures from the continent, and those of his own devising. These lessons would be paid for and would take place either at the home of the pupil, or in a local barn where a number of pupils could take part. These lessons were not exclusive to the rich or poor and the dancing master, and his musician who would often travel with him, would stay for a short while and be expected to teach figures and steps as well as deportment and other matters of etiquette, even as far as kissing! As these dance tutors would travel it would be possible that they would settle in areas that other masters had visited and so it was important that their repertoire was kept constantly new and individual (Friel: 2004, Brennan: 2004). As a result, dances travelled quickly from the continent into the British Isles and the fashions came and went. Unfortunately, this trend does rather contradict the ideal of the ancient folk dance that has remained unchanged for centuries. As these dances had calendar and ritual significance, these were often performed at other events and were not subject to changes in fashion and interpretation in the same way.

Up to this point, all of the references have been to group and couples dances and there has been no mention of solo step dancing. As this solo tradition is popular in Ireland at annual competitions and in large stage shows, as well as in Scotland with the 'Highland Fling' and in Wales and England with solo clog dancing, one could be forgiven for assuming that a similar tradition exists on the Isle of Man. However, solo step dancing cannot be readily seen in modern traditional dance. It did, however, once exist as can be seen from a Manx newspaper report of 1886:

Not to make individuous comparisons, the efforts of Master Oscar Race in a couple of songs and a step-dance were perhaps best appreciated. The second part of the programme included a pedestal dance by Private C. Christian.

The article refers to a concert at the Volunteer Recreation Club, evidently an event of enough note to warrant a report in the local paper. The tone suggests that the step dance was a normal part of concert proceedings. The term 'pedestal dance' is not well-known, although it can be surmised that this was a step dance performed atop a small pedestal as can be seen in other traditions, such as the 'Boscastle Breakdown' in Cornish tradition today; a clog dance performed on top of a barrel to demonstrate the neat steps that the dancer is capable of. As there is little to no evidence of a clog dancing tradition on the Isle of Man it would seem likely that both the step dance and pedestal dance were performed wearing everyday leather shoes.

Sadly, the same year includes newspaper reports of moves being made by the Douglas Wesleyan Methodist Church to remove the licences for the sale of liquor from singing and dancing saloons in an attempt to protect public morality. Evidently part of this public morality included 'promiscuous dancing' and the resolution of this association was taken to Tynwald. Methodist institutions, a large religious group on the Isle of Man at the time, were very much against dancing as every-day entertainment and this presents a possible reason for the decline of indigenous dance on the Isle of Man. Whilst the Methodists were not against all forms of dance, the type carried out in the public house, and therefore most likely at the family gathering, fair or other celebration was deemed 'promiscuous.' This demonisation of dance is evident in a quote by the famous author Hall Caine in his autobiography *The Little Man Island* of 1894:

The same night the Melliah supper was held in the big barn. There was plenty to eat, but no strong drink (for 'himself' was a teetotaler); there was singing, but no dancing (he was a local preacher, and high up in the Plan-beg).

(Miller: 2005, p.76)

During the same period that Hall Caine was writing, a great mission was undertaken to collect the traditional music of the Isle of Man. Dr John Clague, Deemster J.F. Gill and his brother, the composer, W.H. Gill travelled around the Island, collecting old songs and tunes from the people who lived on the marginal lands, those who it was assumed would remember most of the 'old ways' and for whom the modern world held no sway. This highly romantic attitude to the collection of Manx music and the high status of the collectors (a doctor, a deemster and a well-known composer) meant that a very clean and moral collection of music and song was assembled. With the decline of the Manx language and attitudes towards its inferiority, few of the words were collected and all we know of these collections today are the simple tunes and names as transcribed by the collectors, and the highly Victorian arrangements subsequently published by W.H. Gill (Gill: 1896 & Gill: 1898). The extent to which these tunes were corrected or rationalised in any way is unknown, and to what rituals, customs or dances these tunes were related is also often lost. Ironically, at the same time another collector, A.W. Moore, collected a number of ballads and, on publication, concentrated more on the words,

often neglecting to provide the tune. None of these tunes, however, allude to any specific dances.

It would seem likely from the newspaper records referred to above that dance was a popular source of entertainment on the Isle of Man during the nineteenth century, and yet with the increase of influence of the Methodist church and with revivals of music and language, Manx dance began to dwindle in the minds of the Victorian scholar and artist. This does not mean that these dances were lost, but does suggest that they were likely to have fallen very much out of fashion with songs around the piano - a more readily available and affordable instrument - taking the place of much entertainment from dancing.

An example of the effects of the late-nineteenth century collection of music on attitudes to Manx dance can be seen in the silent film *Where Dreams Come True* (1928). In this film two tourists to the Isle of Man go on an imaginary tour of the Isle of Man and take in a traditional Manx wedding. All of the elements traditionally associated with Manx weddings are extant, such as the journey by horse, the capture and ransom of the bride etc. At the festivities of the wedding breakfast the scene closes with a couple dancing to the singing of an old fisherman; his occupation is made explicit from his sou'wester. It is specified that this man, reportedly one of the informants for Mona Douglas, was singing the song 'Manx Wedding'. This song was one of the arrangements created by W.H. Gill from one of the collected folk tunes and published with a piano accompaniment and newly composed English words telling of a great wedding feast and celebration to take place nearby. Ironically, while the sounds to a silent movie are specified, the visual element of the scene appears to be nothing more than a few free style movements by a pair of wedding goers. There is nothing to suggest that what can be seen is in any way a 'step dance' and it is certainly not a discrete couple's dance. Manx dance at the beginning of the twentieth century was evidently deemed less important than songs you could not even hear.

## Chapter 2: The Collection

### 2.1 Mona Douglas



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#### **2.1.1 Constance Mona Douglas (MNHL 9545).**

In the *New Manx Worthies* (2006) Constance Mona Douglas is described in the title to her entry as 'Author, musician and antiquarian'. While this does sum up Douglas' activities it is evident from her papers, publications and biographies that Douglas was considerably more than this. It would be easy to believe that Douglas was in fact many people; Douglas the poet, the folk singer, the collector, the librarian, the revivalist, the journalist, the farmer, the playwright, the theosophist. And yet she was all of these things, and it was all of these threads that led to a prolific body of work and a lasting cultural legacy. However, it is all of these threads that also leaves the scholar the unenviable task of understanding the processes through which Douglas worked and the impact that these have had on Manx culture as a whole.

Douglas was born in 1898 in Liverpool to Manx parents Frank Beardman and Frances Mona Douglas. As a child she was fascinated with English poetry. Her constitution was deemed

incapable of dealing with the climate in Liverpool and she was sent to live with her grandparents on the Isle of Man. Around the age of ten Douglas met Sophia Morrison, an important character in the revival of Manx culture, who reportedly taught Douglas the rudiments of music and presented her with a notebook and a propelling pencil and set her off to collect stories and songs (Bazin: 2006). This was made easier for Douglas as she was often taken with her grandfather as he travelled around the countryside and spent time on fishing boats. Douglas classed herself as uneducated and spent much of her school days at this occupation and not in the classroom with her peers.

Her first publication aged 17 came in the guise of a book of her poetry *Manx Song and Maiden Song*. Sadly, two years later, her friend Morrison passed on. It was this friendship that brought Douglas into contact with *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*, the Manx Language Society, where she succeeded Morrison as secretary. Douglas also became the Manx delegate for the Celtic Congress movement, a post which brought her into contact with many scholars of Celtic studies and influential players in the various Celtic revivals. At one such Celtic Congress held in Wales Douglas was received as a bard of the Gorsedd under the bardic name Mona Manaw and by 1921 she was secretary of the Manx branch of the Celtic Congress.

Douglas did not spend all of her formative years on the Isle of Man, however. In 1921 she studied for a year in Dublin and in 1925 she lived in London as personal secretary to writer, lyricist and pan-Celt A.P Graves through whom she also worked closely with the English Folk Dance Society (EFDS) at Cecil Sharp House in Camden. It was during her time in Dublin that Douglas came into contact with Madam Maud MacBride, more commonly known as Maud Gonne, whose activities later influenced Douglas to start the *Aeclagh Vannin* youth movement (Bazin: 1998).

On her return to the Isle of Man Douglas contributed to histories of the Isle of Man for schools, curriculum in Manx folklore, archaeology, history, literature and language. Douglas also continued to publish material including further collections of her poetry as well as the first volumes of *12 Manx Folk Songs*, arrangements of songs collected by Douglas and arranged by Arnold Foster of the English Folk Song Society (EFSS) with words composed and/or translated by Douglas.

During the war years, Douglas formed a great friendship with an Italian internee Nikolai Giovannelli, who had been allocated to help Douglas on her farm, 'the Clarum' at Ballaragh. As an upland farm this was somewhat of an experiment in agricultural techniques. However, in 1945 Giovannelli was forced to return to London and the experiment sadly failed (Bazin: 2006). However, the seeds had been sown for a long-standing friendship between Douglas and Giovannelli.

With her training as a librarian from her time in Dublin, Douglas took up a post in the Rural Library where she worked until 1963. Upon retirement she became a journalist for Isle of Man Newspapers, a post she kept until she died. During this period Douglas was active in a number of cultural organisations such *Ellany ny Gael* and the Manx Folk Dance Society (MFDS) as well as *Aeglagh Vannin* and continuing to research and write on all aspects of Manx culture. In 1977 Douglas began the revival of the *Cruinnaght Ashoonagh dy Vannin* or Manx National Gathering of the early twentieth century and in 1977 held a two-day festival. This grew to become a festival known throughout the Celtic world, recognised by the Welsh *Eisteddfod*, the Scottish *Mod* and the Irish *An t'Oireachtas*. Thirty years later, the festival remains one of Douglas' greatest legacies and provides an opportunity for all residents of the Isle of Man as well as visiting Celts and tourists to experience all elements of Manx culture.

Douglas' work was recognised, but only in later life. She was awarded the Mannanan Trophy in 1972, was made International President of the Pan-Celtic Festival in 1980, was eventually awarded the MBE in 1982 (after originally rejecting it), was the first patron of the Manx Heritage Foundation in 1986, and in 1987, seventy years since her admission as Mona Manaw, was appointed to the principal order of the Gorsedd of the Bards. The same year Douglas died, and she was posthumously awarded the greatest of Manx awards, the *Reih Bleeannee Vannanan*.

It is well documented in published sources and by friends and associates of Douglas that she was an unusual character. Whilst not necessarily eccentric, she was deemed somewhat of an oddity, as she appeared to have no time for apparent or real set backs and was single-minded and seemingly inexhaustible in her endeavours for whatever cause. She was unmarried and lived with her cats as companions. Even when she was unable to drive she was not deterred from travelling all over the island on her bicycle and by public transport. Those who remember her when she did own a car fondly recall her parking skills, or lack thereof. The great 'panache' with which she drove seems a lasting metaphor for the way in which Douglas approached all aspects of her life. (Bazin: 2006 & 1998).

It was during Douglas' travels with the Celtic Congress and to Dublin and London that her revivalist activities developed. Douglas was evidently aware of similar movements elsewhere and that these movements included not only music, language and folklore, but also dance. In an elegy to Douglas given by the Rev. Kissack we are told 'Her vision was for a generation that could speak Manx, sing Manx, play Manx, dance Manx but above all, feel Manx and celebrate Manxness.' (Bazin: 1998)

It is unlikely that as a very young girl, writing down what was told to her by older friends and family held such a strong revivalist agenda, but these intentions quickly grew as she came

into contact with others involved in similar activities. Her knowledge of all aspects of Manx culture and history meant that Douglas had a very realistic view of the Manx situation. Whilst aware that the traditions and activities of an older generation were falling out of favour, she was also aware that an over romanticised view of these activities was not helpful. Whilst she talks of Manx culture having been eclipsed since the middle ages and the sudden decline in Manx arts since the middle of the nineteenth century, she is also aware that many think of the Isle of Man as isolated and cut off from the rest of the world until the inception of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, which is not true. It is her awareness of the cosmopolitan nature of the Isle of Man and its relationships with England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales which shaped her vision (MNHL 9545: Various). In one particular paper (MNHL 9545: Box 5) titled 'Some Traditional Songs and Dances of Mann' Douglas states, against popular patriotic opinion, that although Manx customs are unique to the Isle of Man, they are also linked to customs of mankind as a whole, and that from an anthropological perspective we are all part of one big chain. She was aware that Manx folklore is very small in comparison to the large corpus of that in England, but that each culture has a distinct idiom and this is a national one. Douglas had spotted similarities to other dance traditions and was instructed by the EFDS that Manx dance also had unique characteristics, a fact which seems to come as a bit of a surprise to her.

Sadly the above document is undated. However, considering Douglas' papers and experiences it would seem likely that this was relatively early, as during her life as she increasingly came into contact with other scholars and revivalists, specialists in their fields, Douglas' then attitudes begin to become more romantic, in one paper linking the oral nature of Manx folklore and culture to druidic systems of transmission from 'mouth to ear'. The druids are highly important to the likes of the Gorsedd and this idea would seem likely to have come from this contact and from Douglas' own observations. Douglas was inspired as a young woman by the work of the pan-Celtic movement and she began to support a move toward nationalism, of a unity of Celtic states and a return to the ancient Celtic clan system.

An investigation of Douglas' newspaper clippings is illustrative of her interests with many on the events surrounding folk dance from England and Ireland during the 1920s and 1930s, but also of all things Celtic, in some way unusual or unexplained and relating to nationalism. She was certainly not isolated in her views or in any way 'marooned' on a small island with a tiny source of folklore. She was aware of the pan-Celtic movement from as soon as she was old enough to be involved and it certainly influenced her ways of thinking throughout her life. Her romantic notions grew as a result of this influence, but she remained grounded in basic concepts of interconnectedness between cultures and the cosmopolitan nature of the Isle of Man.

## **2.2 Philip Leighton Stowell**



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### **2.2.1 Philip Leighton Stowell performing the Morris Jig at Albert Road School c.1935 (MNHL PG4958/4).**

Compared to Douglas, there is little biographical information on Philip Leighton Stowell to draw from. Born in 1897 he talked little of his childhood, even to his own family, and so nothing is known of his school years. He was the child of an artist and author, Flaxney Stowell, and his wife, and was born and grew up in Castletown. He trained as a teacher at Chester College, and assuming he followed the usual educational route and completed his training aged 21 would have taken up his first position as a teacher at Albert Road School, Ramsey around 1918. He had gained some musical training during his education and at Albert Road he led a small choir. His original involvement with folk dancing is not known. His daughter, Aileen Hall, who performed much of the vocal accompaniment to Stowell's dances in latter years, states that he became interested in country dancing on a trip to the Albert Hall, and resolved to learn about Manx dancing when he saw what was happening in the field of English and other country dancing (Hall: 2006). However, there is little evidence for this in his papers. He was approached by Douglas in 1928 to help restore the Manx dances she had collected to a performable state. We know that at this time he was a keen English Country and Morris dancer and was instructing a small team of children at Albert Road in these dance forms. How he came to be involved in English Country and Morris dancing is not known. However, Hall does also state that in 1969 Stowell received a plaque commemorating sixty years of folk dancing. It is not known from whom this plaque was received, but taking into

account the age of Stowell and the year in which he received the plaque it would imply that he had been folk dancing since the age of twelve; since 1909.

After his introduction to Manx dances by Douglas in 1928, Stowell continued to teach English and Manx dances to his pupils at Ramsey until he moved in 1934 (Hall:2006) - or 1937 in most other documentary sources - to Victoria Road School in Castletown, where he introduced the children and teachers in his home town to folk dancing as well. It is worth noting that in her recollections of her father Hall does not mention the meeting with Douglas.

Hall describes her father as an 'outdoor man' who was always rambling. He did not learn to drive and would often walk to any necessary destination. He married in 1927 and had two daughters Aileen and Margaret. Hall also describes him as 'undeniably idiosyncratic' with his own views on all things Manx from place names, to his own versions of well-known rhymes and plays, such as the White Boys Mummerys play. He was a relatively diminutive man and quietly spoken, although he had a temper and this often accompanied his strong opinions (Hall: 2006).

Stowell was a founding member of the Manx Folk Dance Society (MFDS) in 1951 and he was awarded the Mannanan Trophy in 1966 and received the freedom of Castletown in 1972 in recognition of his services as a folk dancer, lecturer, teacher and more. In 1978 Stowell died and was buried in Malew. In 1981 the MFDS published a posthumous collection of Stowell's composed dances and dance tunes *The Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances*.

These composed dances were often based on well known folk traditions such as the use of the Billey Kiern or Mountain Ash to ward off evil, or the customs surrounding turf cutting. Other dances were composed purely out of necessity, as dancers in his group were in need of a new couples dance, or a dance for three people. Stowell appears to have latched on firmly to the idea of the 'purt-y-beeyll' or tune lilted to nonsense words used to accompany a dance. In many cases Stowell's dances would begin as a poem, then he would compose a tune to fit the poem and then the dance would be composed to the tune. In the case of 'Gorse Sticks' the metre of the poem called for a tune in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, not a time signature that Manx steps would fit to. Rather than changing the tune, Stowell altered the steps to fit. In some cases, Stowell used similar tunes or titles to his dances as incomplete dances collected by Douglas, which can be confusing when tracing the history of each individual dance (see Appendix 1). Stowell was so taken with the idea of the purt-y-beeyll that he even asked Douglas to provide him with Manx words to fit with tunes for dances such as Eunyssagh Vona, and his daughter Aileen was usually called upon to perform them. In one case he went as far as organising a small choir to accompany the dance.

### **2.3 The Collection of Manx Dances by Mona Douglas**

The collection of Manx dances was carried out in the main by Douglas. This process began when she moved from Liverpool to Lonan to live with her grandparents. Her grandmother had learnt many dances, steps and figures from her own father, Douglas' great-grandfather, Philip Quayle of Glentrammon. He had been part of a Mylecharane's March set and was well known as a singer and musician. Douglas talks of him being involved in all forms of music making and dance during the mid-nineteenth century at gienses (parties), mheilleas (harvest festivals) and Oie'll Verrey's (celebrations of Old Christmas) and he was reportedly referred to as the best dancer in the North. He taught all of his children to dance and would put them into sets on the flag stones in the kitchen as soon as they were able. They would dance to his singing and the clapping of his wife and the servant girl, and on special occasions William Caley the fiddler would come to the house to play (Douglas: 1945). He wrote some of the dances that he knew down in an old notebook and this passed down to his favourite daughter, Douglas' grandmother. When his first wife died he remarried, to a woman who sadly did not approve of dancing. Douglas learnt many steps, figures and dances from her grandmother and the notebook eventually passed to her. This was not, however, Douglas' only contact with Manx dances. In her childhood dances were still performed and she was lucky to see some of these, in particular Chyndaa yn Bwoailley or the courting dance, which was still performed regularly at mheilleas hear her home around Ballaragh.

At some point during the process of collection, spurred on by Morrison, Douglas transferred her notes, her recollections of her grandmother's instructions and the notes from her great-grandfather's notebook into one notebook. This book is, frustratingly, un-dated but can be found in Douglas' private papers held in the Manx museum library (MNHL 9545 Box 9). Titled *Folklore Notebook: Dances, Tunes, Descriptions & Notes*, cross-references within the pages give reason to believe that this was one of two books, the second not yet recovered. This book contains notes on fourteen dances, twelve generally complete and two that remain as vague recollections and notes of shapes and movements, but without definite figures or steps.

As can be seen in the table below, eleven of these dances were complete in both the notebook and in a paper given by Douglas in 1937 in which she lists all of the dances complete and those which remain in note-form. From the appearance of the handwriting in the book, the pen used and the numbers of informants, it seems likely that, while the bulk of the notes in this book were entered before 1937, the book continued to be used. Looking at the table below the dates in the column titled 'Completion Date' give the earliest provable date that the dance was completed. This, in the main, corresponds to the first publication date. As will be seen later, the date of publication is often considerably later than the date of collection and/or completion as publication is often a long and arduous process.

Folklore Notebook: Dances		1937	Completion Date
Flitter Dance	Complete	Incomplete	1957
Hunt the Wren	Complete	Complete	1937
Chyndaa yn Bwoailley	Complete	Complete	1926
Eunyssagh Vona	Complete	Complete	1937
Jemmy as Nancy	Complete	Complete	1937
Car ny Ferrishyn	Complete	Complete	1928
Car Juan Nan	Complete	Complete	1937
Yn Guilley Hesheree	Complete	Complete	1936
Dirk Dance	Complete	Complete	1928
Men's Jig	Complete	Complete	1931
Mylecharane's March	Complete	Complete	1930
Bwoaill Baccagh	Complete	Incomplete	1957
Salmon Leap	Incomplete	Incomplete	
Mollag Dance	Incomplete	Incomplete	

### 2.3.1 Dances in *Folklore Notebook: Dances, Tunes, Descriptions & Notes* in relation to completed dances in 1937 (MNHL 9545).

It would seem likely, then, that the dances in this notebook were collected before 1937 with notes to Flitter Dance and Bwoaill Baccagh being added later. Four dances are mentioned in the 1937 paper that are not included in this notebook: Hop tu Naa, Peter O'Tavy, Fathaby Jig and White Boys. Mheillea is also included as not complete. Hop tu Naa, Peter O'Tavy and Fathaby Jig may have been noted in the second notebook, if in fact there was one. In another box, undated notes to the Fathaby Jig can be found (MNHL 9545 Box 4). There is no indication as to the origins of Hop tu Naa or Peter O'Tavy, although latter references to the dance imply that these dances were well known. Both of these dances have dates of completion before 1937 (1935 and 1936 respectively) and so it is possible that these dances were already complete at the time of compiling the notebook, possibly completely described in the manuscript of Philip Quayle, or were included in another volume or loose sheets which are now lost. Mheillea was not completed until 1943 and it is likely that the vague descriptions of the dance before this point as a circular dance performed at harvest time were not included as they were too scant. White Boys was collected in 1935 by Philip Leighton Stowell and so would not be included in Douglas' notebook.

While the teachings of Douglas' grandmother and the notebook left to her by Philip Quayle were no doubt invaluable to Douglas' collection of Manx dances, over 30 informants from across the Isle of Man were also consulted. They provided detail which often agree with previous information and also added new information, other times correcting misinformation already collected by Douglas.

The only dances known to have been included in Philip Quayle's manuscript are Mylecharane's March and Men's Jig. Although the main description for the former dance

comes via Douglas' grandmother it is mentioned as being in the book. Stowell claims to have seen Quayle's manuscript and some of the notation to Men's Jig, although not enough to learn the whole dance. The remaining contents of this manuscript will remain a mystery as it is now lost. However, a number of other dances were collected by Douglas from Philip Quayle via her grandmother. A very vague description of the Mheillea, the whole of Chyndaa yn Bwoailley and the Fairy Reel all came from Quayle's daughter, along with the steps and figures in the whole. Other are said to have been learnt from 'Granny' but the names of these are not given.

Douglas collected from 30 other informants. The bulk informed her of one dance only, while some informed her of more than one dance. Often these dances were initially only mentioned by an informant, with Douglas continuing to question until a full dance was gathered. An example of this is Flitter Dance, which begins with information from Mrs Callow from Cardle Veg who tells Douglas that the dance was performed in an S shape. Another variant was collected from Mrs Teare of Ballaugh, a very different version this time. The complete dance was collected from Ada Skillicorn who gave Douglas the figures and verified the use of the S formation for the dance. Finally, Douglas collected the sidings step vital to the dance from Mrs Radcliffe. A similar situation can be seen with the dance Bwoaill Baccagh, although this time Douglas begins with a step from Mr Corlett of Ramsey and, after asking Mrs Bridson of Glen Meay and James Quine a fisherman from Peel, she finally completes the dance with the aid of Caesar Cashen and William Quane of Peel. Douglas often refers to the dances as being reconstructed from notes and it can be assumed that this refers to the process of collecting a number of notes from different informants until a complete picture of the dance can be obtained.

Other dances appear to be complete from a single informant. Yn Guilley Hesheree and Hunt the Wren were both collected as complete dances from John 'Pat' Kelly a fisherman from Baldrine, while the entirety of Eunyssagh Vona was collected from J Caine from Jurby from a demonstration to the lilted tune. Other demonstrations and informants backed up the notes left to her by Quayle. Men's Jig was contained in these notes and latterly demonstrated and described by William Craine, an 80 year old from Jurby, Pat Moore Kermode, Mrs Scarffe from Maughold and John Pat Kelly the fisherman from Baldrine who had also shown Douglas Yn Guilley Hesheree and Hunt the Wren. Some dances, such as the Dirk Dance, required a number of visits to one informant. Although reports of the collection of this dance vary, it seems likely that Mrs Callow knew of a fisherman, Jackie Kermode, and he was also a family friend of Douglas' grandparents. On a number of occasions Douglas returned to Kermode until she had noted the whole of the Dirk Dance and been taught it by demonstration. Having live informants did not, however, ensure a dance was ever completed. Although many people recalled seeing the Mollag Band, no definite steps or figures for the dance could be found and so the dance remains incomplete. In the case of the Salmon Leap, elements of the

dance were collected from demonstration, such as the infamous leap of the salmon out of a basket of men, as well as basic figures. The steps and exact figures were not noted and so the dance remains a basic description open to interpretation.

Name of Dance	Earliest date of known completion	Informant 1	Informant 2	Informant 3	Informant 4	Informant 5	Informant 6	Informant 7
Dirk Dance	1909	Jackie Kermode	Bella Garrett, Ramsey (PLS)					
Chyndaa yn Bwoailley	1926	Granny	N.C.	Jackie Kermode	Johnny Matey	Observation		
Car ny Ferrishyn	1928	Granny						
Mylecharane's March	1930	Granny/Philip Quayle	Mrs Callow, Cardle Veg	Mrs Olivia, Agneash	Tom Kermode, the Lag	Philip Moore, Peel	William Quine, Peel	John Pat Kelly, Fisherman, Baldrine
Men's Jig	1931	Philip Quayle notes	William Craine, Jurby aged 80	Pat Moore Kermode	Mrs Scarffe, Maughold	John Pat Kelly, Fisherman, Baldrine		
Peter O'Tavy	1935							
White Boys Collected	1935	Unknown (PLS)						
Hop tu Naa	1936							
Eunyssagh Vona	1936	J. Caine, Jurby						
Yn Guilley Hesheree	1936	P. Kelly Baldrine						
Hunt the Wren	1937	John Pat Kelly, Baldrine, Fisherman						
Jemmy as Nancy	1937	P. Kelly, Baldrine	Mrs Callow, Cardle Veg					
Fathaby Jig	1937	Mrs Bridson, Glen Meay	J. Mylchreest	John Pat Kelly, Fisherman, Baldrine				
Car Juan Nan	1937	J. Mylchreest	John Matt, Crofter	J.P. Kelly, Lonan				
Mheillea	1943	Granny	Charles Watterson, Castletown	John Pat Kelly, Fisherman, Baldrine				

Name of Dance	Earliest date of known completion	Informant 1	Informant 2	Informant 3	Informant 4	Informant 5	Informant 6	Informant 7
Daunse Noo George	1948	Tommy the Councillor (PLS)	Ada Corrin (PLS)	James Mylchreest (PLS)				
Car y Phoosee	1953							
Flitter Dance	1957	Mrs Callow, Cardle Veg	Mrs Teare, Ballaugh	Ada Skillicorn	Mrs Radcliffe			
Bwoaill Baccagh	1957	Mr Corlett, Ramsey	Mrs Bridson, Glen Meay	James Quine, Peel, Fisherman	Caesar Cashen, Peel	William Quane, Peel		
Illiam y Thaelhear	1970							
Car ny Rankee	1970							
Shooyl Inneenyn	1970							
Moirrey ny Gainle	1970							
Cur Shaghey yn Geurey	1983							
Ben Rein y Voaldyn	1983							
Moghrey Mie as Maynrys	1983							
Purt Cubbley	1983							
Salmon Leap	Incomplete	Kelly the Blackguard	William Craine, Jurby aged 80	Capt. Thomas Craine	John Pat Kelly, Fisherman, Baldrine			
Mollag Dance	Incomplete	Jack Davis, Ballasalla						

### 2.3.2 Informants by dance as found in the notes of Douglas (MNHL 9545 and published material)

Table 2.3.2 shows that the geographical spread of Douglas' informants covers the entire Island, from Jurby to Castletown, Peel to Lonan and all the places in-between. It seems likely, then, that many of these dances with multiple informants were performed across the Island. Discrepancies between informants may then be due to regional variations. It is known that each town had its own version of the Mollag Dance and the lack of corresponding evidence could explain why the dance has proved impossible to reconstruct. In cases where more than one version may have existed, then either one or the other was chosen, or if this proved impossible, something in-between was chosen. Unfortunately little can be known of the dances collected from a single informant. These may be specific to the individual, family or area or were island wide and only remembered by a single person. There still remain a number of dances the origins of which are not known. They seem to appear in the 1983 publication of *Rinkaghyn Vannin* as collected by Douglas but there is no hint as to where or from whom they were collected.

Douglas published many papers on her collecting exploits. However, in all of her papers, only a small number of her informants are ever mentioned. Nevertheless, these papers do give us insight as to the dates at which certain dances were collected. In a paper to accompany the performances of Manx dances at the Albert Hall for the All England Festival in 1932 Douglas says that only six dances have been collected: Dirk Dance, Chyndaa yn Bwoailley, Car ny Ferrishyn, Mylecharane's March, Men's Jig and one other (unnamed). By 1937 fourteen dances are complete and five still under investigation. This is a big jump in number implying that the bulk of Douglas' collection took place between 1932 and 1937. However, as seen previously, it is possible that much collection had taken place before 1932 and the final pieces of the jigsaw were collected before 1937.

Before 1958 only the collecting from Douglas' grandmother and Jackie Kermode are mentioned. Douglas does say, however, that her knowledge of dances from these sources made it easier to continue collecting. She had discovered that many of the dances were referred to as games, seemingly to avoid religious disapproval, and came across many fishermen who would still dance for a drink in the pub. It may seem unusual that a young single woman would enter the pub to collect dances but Douglas does not explain how she was able to do this (Douglas: 1945, Douglas: 1949, Douglas: 1957). In 1958 Douglas published a paper in the JEFDSS on her memories of collecting. As the bulk of Manx dances were complete by 1937, nearly twenty years had passed since many of the meetings had taken place that Douglas was writing about and Douglas was now sixty years old. This paper mentions John Matt, from whom she collected Car Juan Nan, John Kelly of Baldrine, a source for Hunt the Wren, Mheillea, Fathaby Jig, Men's Jig, Mylecharane's and some information on the Mollag Dance and the Salmon Leap. She also mentions Mrs Clague of Niarbyl who does not appear in Douglas' note-books, but whom she says taught her figures and steps and Mrs Callow. Although Douglas continues to write of her collecting excursions

until her death, no other informants are mentioned. In all of her writings there is a romantic element to the collecting process, with tales of lonely afternoons spent on the hills learning steps and figures, or secret performances from men whose wives did not approve of their dancing. In particular, Douglas' final demonstration of the infamous salmon leap when she finally came across Kelly the Blackguard, and thought him a vagrant. She turned back to follow him and managed to overtake him without him noticing. When she cut him off and stopped him to ask her to demonstrate, he reportedly mistook her for the *Lhiannan Shee*, a female spirit, and would not speak to her until he thought her human.

It is apparent from her papers, however, that Douglas did not just collect from single informants, but that others were often involved in demonstrations. In her notebook (MNHL 9545 Box 9) she tells of two unsuspecting lads being drafted in to demonstrate the hey for six in Mylecharane's March with two informants, a bit of a feat with only four people, two of whom did not know it. In her paper of 1958 Douglas tells of John 'Pat' Kelly persuading other family members to join in to demonstrate bodies and figures in his house in Baldrine. It is not until 1973, however, that we have any mention of the famous dancing boards in published material. According to Douglas, her grandmother told her that notable male dancers would travel in pairs and groups with springboards on which they would sprinkle sand and perform for drinks in pubs. These boards were used for solo or double jigs, step dances and Mylecharane's March. While only one solo jig and Mylecharane's March were collected by Douglas, her knowledge of these spring boards helped her gain the trust of many of her informants. The late involvement of information such as this in her publications is often now cited as reason to believe that some of this information was not a true reflection of what happened, and is often deemed as myth building to give the dances more credence.

However, as can be seen from her notebook and the number of informants not mentioned in publications, these papers give only a small amount of the available information. Much myth building has also been carried out by third parties surrounding Douglas' collecting activities. In Hannan's article on Manx dance in a 1986 edition of dance magazine *Instep* he states that Douglas was nearly hired herself while collecting Shooyl Inneenyn at a Michaelmas hiring fair in Kirk Michael. This is not reflected in Douglas' papers. There is no reference to the collection of this dance; in fact it is one of those that appears later as a published dance. However, she does at one point state that it may be linked to the hiring fairs. In a separate paper Douglas also states that she was nearly hired in Michael whilst attending one of these fairs as she was so fit looking, however there is no mention of the dance in conjunction with this anecdote.

Very little is known of Stowell's collecting activities,. There is no documentary evidence illustrating the collection of White Boys except to state that he could not find a definitive final movement, one had the dance finishing with the dancers kneeling around the doctor, and

another with them lying in a cartwheel like formation (MNHL 9545 Box 21). Stowell collected Daunse Noo George sometime before 1948 from Tommy the Councillor, Ada Corrin and James Mylchreest, but very little other information is given on this dance. It is possible that Stowell also collected the tune to his composed dance Manx Jig, now commonly known as Girl's Jig. When instructed not to use the same tune as Men's Jig by Douglas in 1951, Stowell asked around to see if anyone else knew the tune. A farmer he met whilst out on a walk informed him he knew of it and said it went with a song about a wedding, although the lyrics appeared to be very similar to 'A Manx Wedding' a song published by Gill in 1896 to the tune of the Manx dance Car y Phoosee. Stowell managed to track down the tune and note it from Mrs Watterson at the Level, Colby and it must be assumed that this is the tune now published alongside the dance in the published collection of his dances in 1981.

It seems likely then, that Douglas did collect as many as fourteen dances from one or more informants. She also collected fragments of other dances, some eventually completed by other informants, and others remaining as fragments. These informants were both male and female, their occupations were varied and they stretched the full length and breadth of the island. However, in her published works Douglas mentions only a few of them, concentrating mainly on the manuscript left by her great-grandfather and the collection of the Dirk Dance from Jackie Kermode of Maughold. Over time her descriptions of the events at which Douglas collected these dances and fragments and the people from whom she collected them grew more and more romantic, and occasionally information was published for the first time much later than some. Other scholars and writers then processed these published notes and caused some confusion as to the correct sequence of events and this also then appeared as myth building. Some dances, however, have no information given on them. As so many of them have such detailed notes on their collection it would seem likely that there are notes and records no longer extant that may hold the answer to these mysteries. As much of what is recorded was not published then it would not seem unusual for other information to have existed but not to have been published either. Although Stowell only collected a small amount of dance information it is apparent that this was also collected from informants who demonstrated both movements and music to him, which he subsequently noted down. The bulk of this collection by both Douglas and Stowell was complete by 1948.

## **Chapter 3: The Demonstration**

### **3.1 1929 EFDS Easter Vacation School**

In 1928 Douglas was invited to give a lecture on Manx music at the English Folk Dance Society's Easter Vacation School that was to be held on the Isle of Man the following year. She was already known for her work on the collecting of folk songs and her collaborations with Arnold Foster, and was therefore an obvious choice. It is also now known that Douglas was living in London at the time and was working closely with the EFDS, so it is possible that she in some way influenced the choice of venue for the vacation school (Stowell in Bazin: 1998 p.21). However, as Douglas had collected together a number of notes of dances she decided it would be best to demonstrate some of these in her lecture. She approached Stowell, who at the time had a team of young English Country and Morris dancers, to decipher the notes and perform some of the dances. It seems likely that the first dances recreated were the Dirk Dance, Chyndaa yn Bwoailley and Eunysagh Vona, although Car Ny Ferrishyn and Car Juan Nan was also reconstructed at a similar time (MFDS: 1981 p.1).

A member of Stowell's country-dance team, Marjorie Coates, remembers dancing to music played on an old gramophone. One afternoon the members of this team were excused lessons to go and dance in the hall - they had a pianist playing the music and Douglas and Stowell were both there. Although Douglas had the notes to the dances, it was recognised that she and Stowell often disagreed on the way the dances should be performed, often resulting in lengthy rows and debates for which the children were often sent out of the room until a compromise had been reached. Coates recalls that Douglas favoured the essence of the dances, whereas Stowell had a more perfectionist and precise attitude, evidently a result of his knowledge of English dance (Stowell in Bazin: 1998 p. 99).

It is worth noting here the use of the word 'reconstructed' in this context. While no judgement is being made here on the provenance of the notes used by Douglas for the instruction of these dances (See Chapter 2 and Appendix 1), the interpretation of dance notes always includes an element of reconstruction. Dance movement is so varied and can include so many elements as the whole body must be taken into consideration as separate moveable parts. Music notation is also interpreted as a set of single instructions with regard to speed, pitch, volume, technique etc. but as music notation can be very exact, performances of music by different musicians are very similar. However, they do vary slightly as one conductor or performer's idea of slow may be slower than another's etc. Dance is less exact as it is very difficult to express in words the entire movement of every element of the human body. Laban attempted to create a form of notation to express any form of dance, but this is a very complex graphic notation and was not known to Douglas. Just as the performance of any piece of musical notation is the reconstruction of the composer's intention through the interpretation of a series of single instructions, so is the performance of a dance from the

collector's or choreographer's notes. The same process can be seen today when a dance team attempt to perform a dance from the published notes available to them.

From Douglas' extant notes in 1928/9 a number of dances were reconstructed for performance. Three of these were performed for the EFDS in 1929, although only one is now regularly mentioned. Douglas Kennedy, who was at that time president of the EFDS and was chairing the proceedings, was so excited by the performance of the Dirk Dance that he nearly fell off his chair. The following morning he reportedly rushed to send a telegram to Cecil Sharp House informing them that he had found a new sword dance (Bazin: 1998). This was to prove to be a turning point in the history of the revival of Manx dance. No documentary evidence has been found referring to the other dances that were performed, the reaction to them or even their titles. It proved to be a great surprise to the EFDS that Manx dances still existed however, and the discovery of a new sword dance was to cause a stir throughout the British folk dance community.

A stream of correspondence between Douglas and Kennedy can be seen in Douglas' papers throughout 1930 (MNHL 9545 Box 1 & 19). In June, Kennedy requested the notes of the dances performed by the Ramsey schoolboys to publish in the JEFDS, and he follows this up in October. In November he requested that 'the boy', i.e. Billy Cain, travel to London to perform the Dirk Dance at the All England Festival the following January. Cain travelled alone, a lengthy journey for an unaccompanied thirteen-year-old boy. The following account appears in Douglas' notes and would appear to be part of a press release preceding the return of Manx dancers to the 1932 All England Festival.

Last January folk dancers from all over the kingdom, gathered together for their annual festival in the Albert Hall, had a distinct thrill. About half way through the programme, the orchestra broke into a monotonous, haunting little tune, and a young schoolboy, grave of face and graceful of body, stepped forward and performed a solo sword dance unlike anything previously seen in England. Captivated, the huge audience applauded him to the echo, and insisted upon a repetition, the only one of the evening.

(MNHL 9545 Box 5: Manx Dances for the Albert Hall)

The orchestral arrangement had been provided by Arnold Foster, and the orchestra began the piece too quickly and Billy Cain was forced to stop and ask them to play it slower, which they duly did.

Arnold Foster, born in 1898 in Sheffield, was a well known arranger of folk music. He trained at the Royal College of Music in London and was a protégé of Ralph Vaughan Williams. He had been involved in another EFDS Summer School where he had met A.I. Caine of Douglas who introduced him to some Manx airs that had been collected by Douglas. He duly wrote to Douglas to ask permission to arrange some of these, beginning a partnership that was to result in a number of collaborations, including the production of three volumes of *12 Manx*

*Folk Songs*, with Douglas' collected tunes, composed and translated words and Foster's arrangements for piano. Douglas passed on the tune of the Dirk Dance to Kennedy in November 1930 evidently in preparation for the performance in January 1931.

The 1931 performance was a great success, evidently not just for Douglas the collector or Cain the performer, and talk of publishing the dance began:

The Manx Dirk Dance has been most successful. Everywhere Billy Cain did it he was encored. My orchestration of the tune came off beautifully and I have been congratulated by all kind of people on the arrangement...I shared the conducting with Dr Vaughan Williams. The thing has been so successful I think it would be a good move to publish the piano arrangement. I saw Mr Howard last week and suggested to him the possibility of publishing a small book containing three Manx Dances with the directions for the dances on one page and the piano arrangement on the other. He seemed quite keen on the idea; so it is up to you now!

(Foster to Douglas, MNHL 9545 Box 21)

As a result of this great success, Cain was invited to perform at the All England Festival the following year and Men's Jig and Mylecharane's March were also performed. The visit was covered by Manx newspapers and the event was hailed a great success. It is worth noting, however, that, while Stowell is regularly mentioned as training the performers, there is little mention of Douglas in these reports, even when it was her father who travelled to London to play the fiddler in Myelcharane's March. Cain was to return to London on a number of occasions, accompanied by a team of dancers, which eventually included girls as well.



By kind permission of Manx National Heritage.

### **3.1.1 The Albert Road Dance Team who travelled to London in 1932.**

(MNHL 9683)

After the 1929 vacation school the EFDS encouraged Douglas to continue to collect dances and to make their notes available. Although Douglas was aware that Manx dances did bear many resemblances to Scottish, Irish and English Dances, the EFDS persuaded Douglas that the dances also had a unique nature, which led to Manx dance being recognised as a unique form of folk dance. Whilst it may appear that the visit of the EFDS inspired Douglas to collect more dances, and with the success afforded to the Dirk Dance, it is possible that there was some intent to find another to equal it. However, it is equally possible, as seen in the information found on the collection of the dances, that Douglas had already collected a number of dances and fragments and the visit of the EFDS simply made her realise how important these were and inspired her to write them up properly, or to find the final pieces of each jigsaw. No one could have predicted the excitement that would be generated by the Dirk Dance, or the way in which it would become a favourite of folk dancers across the British Isles and become synonymous with any mention of Manx dancing. This phenomenon was not restricted to the English folk dance community either. In 1934 at a highland games to be held at the Nunnery in Douglas, Cain was programmed to perform alongside a world champion pipe band, a world champion highland dancer and the famous Dagenham Girl's Pipe Band. Cain himself was described as 'The Manx Boy Champion Dirk Dancer, who has on three occasions appeared at the All England Folk Dance Festival at the Royal Albert Hall' (MNHL).

The Dirk Dance had become an overnight success, although other Manx dances were rarely mentioned, and only as an aside.

### **3.2 Five Manx Folk Dances**

Even before the success of the Dirk Dance with the general public was known, offers of publication for Manx dances began to emerge. June 1930 saw a request from Kennedy for the notes to the dances he had seen on the Isle of Man to be printed in the JEFDS, although in October of the same year he was still asking for them. The delay to his request being answered may be explained by a letter from Douglas to Kennedy of the following month asking for someone at the EFDS to help with the notation of the dances. As explained previously, the notation of movement is notoriously difficult and it is one thing to note down something one has seen as an aide memoir and another to note it down to be interpreted by a third party.

Foster first became involved in the publication of the Manx dances after he arranged the music for the first London performance of the Dirk Dance and almost as soon as it had been performed and its success measured he wrote to Douglas to suggest the publication of the dances. He first suggested the Dirk Dance, Men's Jig and a third, either Mylecharane's March or Chyndaa yn Bwoailley. It is in these early stages that the issue of copyright begins to come to the fore. Foster was aware that the tune used for Chyndaa yn Bwoailley had been added

to by W.H. Gill in a Boosey publication and, as such, could not be arranged by Foster or republished without permission or fee. Foster does suggest using the tune as in Gilchrist's (Gilchrist: 1924) (see Appendix 1) editions of the JEFSS, but this is only a fragment. Interestingly it is Foster who first casts doubt as to the authenticity of the Manx dances, and asks that Douglas be frank about which bits of the dances were made up in order to complete the collected notes. This seemed to be a common practice in English folk dance and seemingly even Vaughan Williams had questioned whether the Dirk Dance had been collected from complete demonstration. Foster was equally worried about the copyright issues regarding Mylecharane's March as he could not find it in Gilchrist's editions, with good reason as the tune used was composed as a variation to the ballad tune in *Manx National Music* (Gill: 1898). Foster was very concerned about infringing copyright, the publishing of any of the dances taking place before their publication by him, e.g. the JEFDS, and that they 'strike while the iron is hot' while the Dirk Dance was still remembered and popular. This 'striking while the iron was hot' was to prove to be a common theme in correspondence between Douglas and Foster.

By April of 1931 there were problems with music publishers in London making it unlikely for a hasty publication, and the iron was deemed well and truly cooled. Douglas had, however, furnished Foster with the descriptions of the dances, although they were also deemed unsuitable, as they were not technical enough to be performed, but they were too technical for a general description. Although the publication now looked unlikely, Foster suggested that Douglas ask one of the EFDS to help her with the notations. However, by January of the following year, shortly after the second performance of the Dirk Dance at the Albert Hall, Foster was again chasing Douglas for the notation as people were asking for the piano reduction of the Dirk Dance tune and Foster had also arranged the tune to Men's Jig; Cum yn Chenn Oanrey Cheh. Foster was still working on Douglas in June 1933 when he again wrote to her and tried to persuade her to get the dances notated by one of the EFDS when she attended a folk dancing summer school in Hereford. Foster was also really quite adamant that Douglas should not pass the dance on until it was published in case sales were undermined:

Whatever you do don't go giving the tune and the dance to anyone who asks for it at the Hereford school, because it is only among the folk dancers that the sale would come if we ever get it done. Personally I don't see why you shouldn't be quite frank about the parts of the dances which you adapted from the English tradition and issue the volume as a set of Manx dances partially reconstructed. The O.U.P. have just sent me a volume of Playford's *Dancing Master* arranged by Imogen Holst and in the preface states that the dances to the tunes were not very interesting and she has therefore made up dances of her own using the steps of the country dance... Miss Steffen and a man called Porter have been doing the same thing, in a volume called 'Maggot Pie'. You will probably meet this at Hereford. All in all I should get on with the Manx Dance Volume at all costs before everyone has forgotten about the Dirk Dance. It will be too late soon.

(MNHL 9545 Box 21)

It is evident that by this date the dances are not yet complete, and Douglas' reticence to publish may be because she does not want to publish dances that include sections she has made up, but it is equally possible that she is still compiling them. As could be seen from her notebooks and informants the process of collection continued throughout the 1930s and 40s.

Immediately after the next performance of the Manx dances at the Albert Hall in January 1934 Foster was once again trying to persuade Douglas to publish the dances, and he was even pushier than the previous attempts. He suggested that Edith Jones help Douglas if 'the EFDS won't get a move on' and he had evidently lined up Stainer & Bell to publish them as he felt that there would be a substantial market for them, especially as they had been performed at the Albert Hall. Foster again mentioned the issues of the reconstruction of the dances, but saw no problem if they were clearly marked as such. In his correspondence he was evidently very keen for this publication to take place with the utmost haste, even suggesting a Miss Holbrow as an alternative to help with the notation in a post script to the communication. Evidently his slight bullying did the trick as in October 1934 Douglas began noting the dances for publication in conjunction with Edith Jones. However, again there were problems with copyright. As many of the dance tunes were already published in *Manx National Songs* and *Manx National Music* (Gill: 1896 & 1898) in some form then Boosey owned the copyright. It was possible to offer the publication of the dances to Boosey to get round this. Again, haste is evident as Foster seemed disappointed that it was unlikely that the publication would be ready for Christmas, which was less than three months away. Although Foster felt that the dances would sell on the back of the popularity of the Dirk Dance, he was not as hopeful that the dances would pass the EFDS Board of Artistic Control which would allow the society to stock the volumes. This was not to prove a problem as in December Foster again wrote to Douglas to discuss the publication and inform her that Eunyssagh Vona had come first in the selection for the Final All England Festival by a landslide ballot. There was now a choice between Stainer & Bell and the EFDS to publish the dances, although Foster seemed to favour Stainer & Bell and to use the EFDS as a stockist. Once again, Foster's marketing schemes abound and he pushed for a quick decision so the publication could be advertised at the next All England Festival to help boost sales once it was ready.

However, by May 1935 it was apparent that the publication was not to happen soon. Despite all of Foster's hurrying and haste, they were dependent on Edith Jones' notation and she had not yet been forthcoming. Although Foster was busy with a ballet, he was ready to start 'worrying' Jones as soon as he was finished. Foster's resolve to keep the tune and dance notes back until publication faltered somewhat when he was approached to publish a simple version of the Dirk Dance tune for a magazine also published by Stainer & Bell *The Young Musician*. Seemingly, Foster's change of heart was not due to the delay in the publishing of the volume of Manx dances, or even for the sake of young musicians, but because there was a fee offered for either 15 shillings or a guinea to be divided between Douglas and Foster.

Almost as an afterthought Foster informed Douglas that Stainer & Bell would then own the copyright to the tune (MNHL 9545 Box 21).

With Douglas' portion of the fee came further admonitions from Foster at the delay in publication of a full volume of Manx dances. Although he was sure that the publication of the tune in *The Young Musician* would not affect the sales of a subsequent publication, he was not telling people about it just to make sure, although it is also evident that he was equally enthusiastic in his correspondences with Edith Jones. In February 1936 Foster completed arrangements of fourteen dance tunes in preparation of the publication and was awaiting the dance notes from Douglas. The copyright issue with regard to the tunes had been circumnavigated as the original Clague and Gill collections were now in the Manx Museum and so available for public consumption. Boosey could no longer claim copyright over the tunes as they had been obtained from the original source and not the published arrangements, although the responsibility for this rested firmly with Douglas, regardless of Foster's role as arranger.

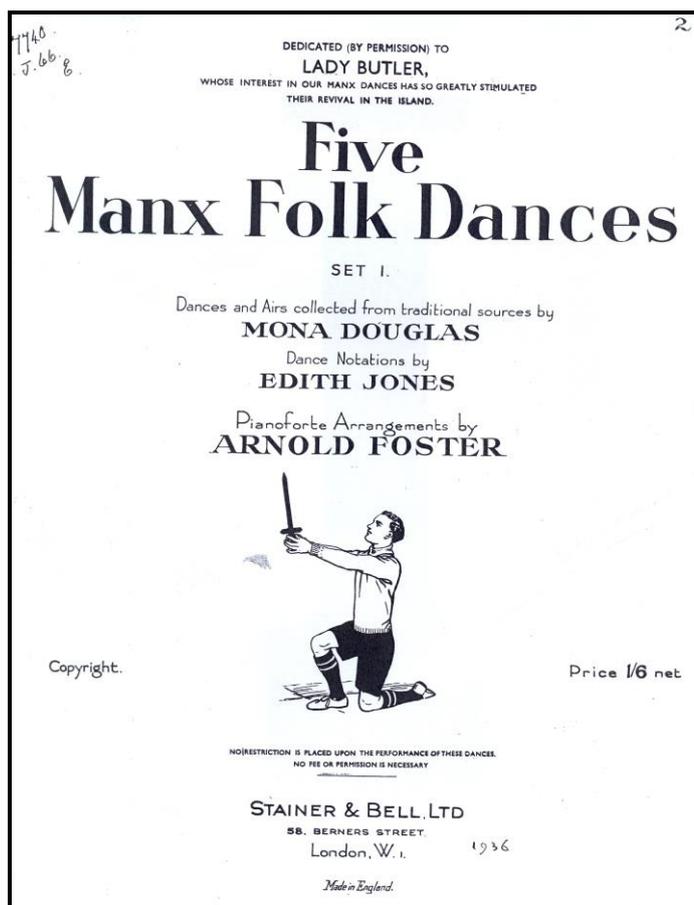
Evidently a letter from Douglas arrived with Foster immediately after his correspondence was posted, as a second letter with the same date was also sent to Douglas, this time referring to Douglas' reservations regarding issues of copyright. It would appear that Douglas did not want to hold the copyright for the dances and so was intending to deposit the original notes in the EFDS library at Cecil Sharp House in London. Foster was not happy with this move as he currently had sole rights to the arrangement of tunes collected by Douglas. By her handing over the manuscripts she would have also handed over the rights and any musician would then have been allowed to arrange them, although a representative of Stainer & Bell had already informed Kennedy of the EFDS that this was not the case. It is also evident in this letter that Douglas had been concerned about the performing rights restrictions placed upon the publication, namely that of a fee being payable to the Performing Rights Society (PRS) for every performance. Foster's implied loyalties can be seen as he assured Douglas that the EFDS already had an agreement with the PRS and were not charged. This would seemingly not have applied to performances by non-EFDS groups, such as on the Isle of Man, which rather defeated the object of collecting them in Douglas' eyes. Foster went on to try and persuade Douglas that she was entitled to royalties for her work, that Sharp's descendants were doing the same and that this would not affect the performers. Foster was acutely aware that this move would not sit well with Stainer & Bell as it would affect their profits especially as they were investing a substantial amount in the publication. Foster was still adamant they get the publication done while people still remembered. (MNHL 9545 Box 21)

It is only at this point that correspondence from Douglas to Foster can be found. In September 1936 Douglas was very unhappy. She evidently felt that Stainer & Bell were being very evasive with regard to the removal of the PRS notice from the publication and she was

utterly tired with the question of copyright. She had finally decided to vest the collector's copyright with the EFDS and the Manx Museum equally. While she was happy for Foster to receive royalties for his arrangements she did not want the copyright for the dances to leave the Isle of Man, but she did not want to have to deal with it personally. Douglas was predominantly concerned with making the dances available to everyone for performance and the Manx Museum did not want the copyright tied to any particular publisher. By November 1936 Douglas had won her battle regarding the PRS fee and the notice was removed. Foster had the notes to five dances and the descriptions of steps, although Paddy, evidently someone involved with the notation process, did not agree with some of Douglas' notes. This is not explained and it is not known if Paddy altered the notes accordingly. No sooner did Foster have the first five ready for publication, however, than he was already pushing for the materials for the next volume.

Although Foster was evidently bullying Douglas into getting the publication through as soon as possible and with as much profit for both, or at least for himself, Douglas was not to be fooled. In correspondence from Douglas to Kennedy, dated only as 17<sup>th</sup> March, but evidently from the year 1936, Douglas notifies Kennedy that she will be depositing her notes with the EFDS library to get around any copyright restrictions Foster may attempt to impose on the material.

Unfortunately, while Douglas' intentions in depositing the notes in Cecil Sharp House were entirely selfless and were to protect the material and keep it for the people, it subsequently resulted in the complete loss of this material. In subsequent publications Douglas states that her notes, and in some cases the sword belonging to Jackie Kermodé, although this cannot be verified, were destroyed in the London Blitz when Cecil Sharp House suffered a direct hit. This story is often eyed with suspicion as no record of this deposit can be found in the library. When questioned, the librarian of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House informed the author that the library was not damaged during the blitz, although according to other evidence some part of the building was damaged. When questioned on the lack of records of this deposit it was explained that many things were not recorded and when war broke the most important items in the library were transferred to Douglas Kennedy's home office in Kent where they would be kept more safely. It was suggested that Douglas Kennedy's son, the late Peter Kennedy, might have known of the manuscript's whereabouts. Upon investigation it was revealed, somewhat ironically, that Douglas Kennedy's office had suffered a direct hit during the war and all of his records were lost. This could go some way to explaining the disappearance of the manuscript belonging to Douglas' grandfather, as well as much of the evidence for the provenance of other dances.



**3.2.1 Front cover of *Five Manx Folk Dances* 1936**

In late 1936 *Five Manx Folk Dances: Set I* was published by Stainer and Bell. It was dedicated to Lady Butler, the wife of the Lieutenant Governor. It is worth noting that Foster's name appears slightly larger than those of Douglas or Jones, but it is clearly stated that no restrictions apply to performance and no fee will be charged. The volume contains instructions and music for Yn Guilley Hesheree, Hop tu Naa, Dirk Dance, Chyndaa yn Bwoailley and Eunyssagh Vona although neither Hop tu Naa or Yn Guilley Hesheree were mentioned in previous correspondence. In the foreword to the publication, written by Douglas, it is stated that she hopes that young people will revive the dances and they will fall back into regular use. Many of the informants are named, and tally with the notebooks of Douglas still extant, with a few extras; although it cannot be known which dances these other informants were involved with. It is also worth noting that on the back page of the volume is an advertisement for a Welsh dance, newly recovered and revived in 1918 and also first performed at the All England Festival in 1918. It would appear that the developments in Manx dance were not atypical in its circumstances.

### **3.3. Consolidating the Canon**

While Manx dance continued to be collected throughout the 1930s and 1940s and the publication of 1936 was to be the first of many, dance is a performance and recreation activity

and not traditionally a written phenomenon. It can be seen that as well as the dance team at Albert Road learning Manx dances as well as English ones, there were regular performances of Manx dances at Cecil Sharp House in London (MNHL 9545 Box 21). In 1936 the first Manx evening was held there and at around the same time Manx, morris and sword dancing were to be performed in equal measure at the annual Tynwald Fair proceedings. We have already seen that Billy Cain was treated as somewhat of a celebrity at the Highland Fair at the Nunnery in 1934. However, the extent to which Manx dancing had caught on was summed up by Douglas in a lecture recital given to internees at one of the Rushen camps in 1940:

When Mr Stowell and I began to revive the Manx dances among children and young people we tried very hard to bring over into their modern study and presentation not only the dry bones of scientific accuracy in notation and demonstration, but also the living spirit of beauty and artistry which is the very soul of the folk tradition...many dancers and several different teams have passed through our hands since we started this work...but we feel that the results so far are reasonably good and may well grow better and exert a wider influence as time goes on

(MNHL 9545 Box 5)

Not only were children dancing at Albert Road and in London, but Stowell had moved to Castletown and was teaching dancing to anything up to sixty children and adults, and Douglas was also teaching dancing at the recently created Aeglagh Vannin (Youth of Mann) meetings (MNHL 9545 Box 5). However, the take up rate for Manx dance was not as Douglas would have hoped and in 1945 she made a plea for Manx children and all social gatherings on the Isle of Man and the Manx abroad to use Manx dances for ballrooms and displays, hoping that the publications would be a means of re-popularising the dances (Douglas: 1945).

By 1947, however, the plight of Manx dancing had extended beyond London and Manx school children when Douglas was invited to speak at the Scottish Anthropological Society in Edinburgh on Manx dances, with some demonstrations. Kennedy had already informed them that he would be attending with Cain who now worked with him, and who was the first proponent of the dance. In accordance with this, the Scottish Anthropological Society specifically asked Douglas to speak about this dance (MNHL 9545 Box 19). A mixed team from Castletown were also to attend under the leadership of Stowell. The paper, although read by a third party, was well received and the dances applauded greatly.

By 1950 in Stenning's report on the Isle of Man, there is a distinct note of cynicism. He refers to the recent dance revival as being perpetuated by rural and townsfolk as well as 'come overs'. He makes comparison between other Celtic dance forms and deems Manx dance quite typical in its use of sets and figure and notes that Douglas has collected twelve dances that she deems genuine, this small amount being due to the stifling nature of Methodism. He also finds it necessary to note that there is no maypole dancing, highland dancing or Irish jigs, as he evidently felt that this was expected. Although he is less than complimentary about

Manx dance, it is evident that Manx dance is fully regarded as unique, is not Irish, English or Scottish and that half a dozen dances are well known enough to have reached Stenning's attention.

Although Manx dance had not yet been taken up by the masses in the way that Douglas had hoped, the success of the Dirk Dance had gained recognition for Manx dance both on and off the Island and the subsequent publication of the first set of Manx dances. A distinct canon of half a dozen dances had been formed by 1950, although it is likely that that the community that formed this canon was not the community intended for the material. Douglas had collected Manx dances for Manx people to perform, to save them from being forgotten. However, the dances had been interminably affected and altered by the aesthetic choices of the English folk dance community, first with Stowell as he argued with Douglas over their interpretation for the Albert Road team, and then by the EFDS in their promotion of the Dirk Dance over other dances. It was evident that the selection process for what was and was not permitted to be performed at the All England Festival over five years decided what was displayed to the public and it was an English audience that continued to elevate the Dirk Dance to the position it was to hold for another two decades.

The nucleus of the canon was then fully consolidated by the publication of the first five Manx dances. This publication did not correspond to the first dances to be collected, but to the first five to be deemed suitable for publishing dependent on aesthetic decisions by transcriber, publisher and arranger and also by logistical issues such as copyright. The canon was that of dances for performance on large stages to orchestral accompaniment, and therefore the more dramatic and spectacular dances were promoted. However, the platform intended by the collector for the dances was that of the kitchen or the village hall for participation and not performance. The dances had been accepted as part of the Tynwald Ceremony, but as an event increasingly influenced by the English establishment, and as the dances were given equal footing to well known English forms this is evidently not the forum Douglas had intended for the newly collected and revived dances. Although Douglas is credited with having much influence over the text of the dances, it is evident that she had little control over the context in which they were used and the community surrounding the resulting Manx canon firmly became that of the English canon.

## **Chapter 4: The Development**

### **4.1. Douglas and Stowell**

Stowell and Douglas worked closely together for many years to reconstruct and revive Manx dance. Stowell had considerable expertise in English dancing and Douglas had the texts to work from. Without Stowell's dance group at Albert Road then there would have been no one to demonstrate the dances, and without his cooperation in taking the dancers away to festivals, Manx dance would not have gained the popularity it was to enjoy during the mid twentieth century. In 1931 Douglas was adamant in correspondence with Kennedy that she and Stowell be jointly recognised for their role in the revival of Manx dances. However, it is evident in much of the personal notes of Douglas and Stowell that the relationship between them was not always a harmonious one. We have already seen that they were prone to rows over the artistic interpretation of Douglas' notes. While Douglas preferred the essence of Manx dances, Stowell was more concerned with precision (MNHL 9545 & 9683).

The first hints of any disagreement between the pair came in 1936 when organising a trip to the UK for the Manx dancers. Stowell, after a row, had thrown Cain out of the dance group and was unhappy with Douglas as he felt that she was interfering with the arrangements. It was evident that Stowell felt that he could handle the dance groups now and it was no longer necessary for Douglas to be involved. Douglas duly backed down and left Stowell to organise the trip. However, in a reply to her letter in which she hands full responsibility for the trip to Stowell he is evidently unhappy and feels that he cannot manage to take the boys anywhere, that he is too busy, that the trip is too expensive, etc. In her reply Douglas informs him that it is too late to back out and that he should, in essence, pull himself together and get on with it. Seemingly the fall-out with Cain, in which Cain's mother became involved and made her feelings known to Stowell, had put Stowell off. It is also evident that Stowell prefers the group to perform dances for men only. In 1932 Douglas was trying to persuade him to include mixed dances in the programme for performance away but even by 1936/7 Stowell was still erring towards the men's dances. As an English Morris and Country dancer it is likely that it was with these dances for men that Stowell was more familiar. White Boys, Mylecharane's March, Dirk Dance, Men's Jig and Bwoaill Baccagh are all dances very similar to the English tradition. It seems that Stowell was still thinking very much of Manx dances as another branch of that tradition, even pondering whether Manx dances would be acceptable in the Guild Country Dancing competitions. (MNHL 9545 Box 19 & 21)

The main evidence for an increasing rift between Douglas and Stowell, the seeds of which were evidently sown in the events of 1936, came with a proposed trip to the Scottish Anthropological Society Conference in Edinburgh. Douglas and Cain had remained firm friends and were in regular contact with one another. In April 1948 Cain wrote to Douglas to let her know that Kennedy was planning to perform a number of dances at the Scottish

Anthropological Society event, including Peter O'Tavy, Chyndaa yn Bwoailley, Eunyssagh Vona, the Dirk Dance and possibly Yn Guilley Hesheree or the recently revived Mheillea. Cain was involved with this display and had gathered a team of dancers together. Cain's next letter reveals that Douglas had told him that Stowell was also planning to take a group to Edinburgh and was less than happy about Cain's team also being there:

14 April 1948

As you say, someone is acting very queerly about Edinburgh. I think the best thing to do is let Leighton get along with it in his own way. In any case, there doesn't seem to be anything we can do about it, with all this 'behind the scenes' activity going on. I shall have to let Douglas [Kennedy] know about it of course. It is a pity this has happened as at the school at Felixstowe I discussed it with one or two people whom I had asked to help. Naturally, they will wonder what I am trying to do, but of course it cannot be helped.

I am extremely sorry about your decision not to go to Edinburgh, and hope it is not too late to change your mind, in fact I am sure it is not, and I hope I will see you at the festival despite everything. You ARE the authority after all, and if it had not been for you there would not have been any Manx stuff after all. Leighton was doing only English dances until you presented him with the material on which he is the only living authority!

(MNHL 9545 Box 19)

It appears that Stowell had attempted to claim the credit for much of what had been done in the field of Manx dancing and was not happy at Cain's continued involvement. This attitude upset Douglas so much that she was discouraged from even attending the conference and was to have her paper read by a third party. Correspondence on this issue continued, with Cain continuing to attempt to persuade Douglas to attend the conference, and also reassuring her that without her Manx dance would not exist. The performance of the Dirk Dance was the main issue, but Kennedy was evidently in a placatory frame of mind and was going to allow Stowell's 'chap' to perform at the lectures and Cain to perform in the public displays.

In a letter from Cain to Douglas on 5 July 1948, it was obvious that Douglas had not attended and that Mrs Macintosh had read her paper for her. Kennedy had allowed Stowell's 'chap' to perform on all occasions, although this had caused some embarrassment as Douglas' paper referred to Cain on more than one occasion. Cain did get an opportunity to perform, however, as he was inundated with requests after Douglas' paper and Stowell's 'chap' had had to leave early to catch a train, Cain performed in his absence, although he was in the wrong footwear! Stowell had evidently been voicing his opinions at the event and Cain informed Douglas as to the extent of this by mail:

I am enclosing a cutting from the 'Scotsman' which deals with your paper. I object to Leighton's reference to his team being the only one doing Manx dances. He also said that only one person could do the Dirk Dance at a time, and that he had never had two people trained to do it at the same time. Being an 'Englishman' I am a has-been as far as the dance is concerned! I don't agree really, especially as the music and instructions can be purchased for anyone to use.

I did not think a great deal of the Manx Team's technique and think the standard is lower than it used to be, though I thought his fiddler was very weak and gave nothing to the dancers.

Where did this long cord [sic] on the fiddle originate whilst the girls spin round and the men honour as an introduction? I felt it was not Folk and very theatrical. Maybe I am wrong and may have a religious significance, but it looked pure showmanship when it took place each time.

(MNHL 9545 Box 19)

Stowell's attitude to Manx dance had changed considerably over time and he was evidently willing to say anything to assert his authority over the dances. In a later undated fragment paper Stowell boasts that he has taught all of the Dirk Dancers and that on one occasion, at the 1938 Celtic Congress, he allowed two dancers of equal ability to perform the dance at the same time (MNHL 9683). The idea that only one person could perform the dance at a time supported his argument that Cain should not perform at this event. This rule stuck and became part of the myth surrounding the dance, continued even until this day.



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**4.1.1 Photograph of two Dirk Dancers performing at the same time at the 1938 Celtic Congress. Photograph found within Stowell's papers (MNHL 09683).**

Cain also makes a very valid point that the publication of the notes to the dance effectively made it possible for anyone to dance it. It is also apparent that Stowell has had a distinctly artistic influence over the dances, with the addition of the lady's spin, man's honour and long chord at the beginning of the dance. This honour certainly did not appear in any of Douglas' notes and is not a feature of dances today. However, this long chord does appear in the notes to the dance Dance for Three composed by Stowell. Stowell tried to bolster the idea of

this move as traditional at the end of Douglas' paper. In the published paper (Douglas: 1949) the notes on the discussion after the paper have been published and included Stowell's comments. He said that the Dirk Dance had a religious significance and so had been saved from the Methodists, and that the spinning of the girls at the beginning of each dance was an ancient courtesy movement. There is no mention of any of this in Douglas' notes. Bella Garret did hint at a religious significance in her account of the dance collected by Stowell, but this could equally be a pagan significance. It is worth noting that Douglas was not present at the time to contradict Stowell's opinions.



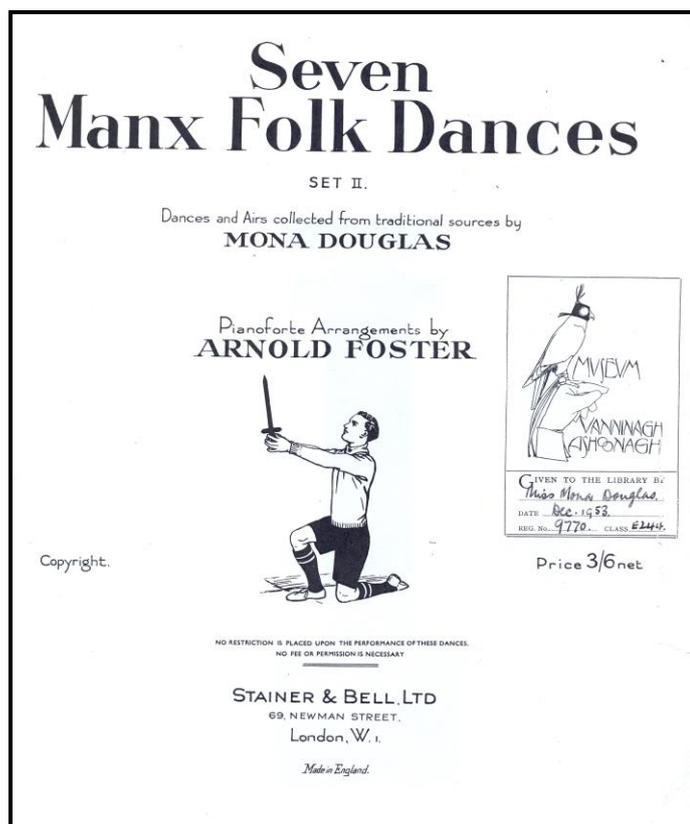
By kind permission of Manx National Heritage.

#### **4.1.2 'The final honour in all Manx dances. Women's honour. PLS 1951'**

(MNHL PG4967/2)

These opinions were conveyed to Douglas, however, by Cain, and it was agreed between them that they were definitely 'phoney' and the spinning and curtsy 'theatrical'. Cain also informed Douglas that Stowell's presentations gave the impression that Manx dances were more complex than they really are, requiring a high level of knowledge, something that is also vehemently disagreed with by Douglas various writings.

## 4.2 Seven Manx Folk Dances.



### 4.2.1 Front cover of *Seven Manx Folk Dances: Set II* 1953

After the success of *Five Manx Folk Dances: Set I* and the increasing number of dances completed and ready to be performed, two further volumes were planned, each of five dances which were ready for publication by 1945. However, due to the effects of the Second World War the publication of these volumes was held up for many years. Douglas hoped that these two subsequent volumes would be used by young people on the Isle of Man and would repopularise Manx dancing to the general populace (Douglas: 1945 & 1949). In 1953 a second volume of dances was eventually published, and contained seven dances; Hunt the Wren, Car ny Ferrishyn, Fathaby Jig, Peter O'Tavy, Car y Phoosee, Cum yn Shenn Oanrey Cheh and Car Juan Nan. It is known that six out of these were collected during the 1920s and 1930s, Car ny Ferrishyn, Peter O'Tavy, Cum yn Chenn or Men's Jig and Car Juan Nan were all performed by the Albert Road Dancers under Stowell's instruction. There is no dating evidence for Car y Phoosee to suggest when this was collected. However, the bulk of the contents of the volume was collected and completed twenty years before the date of publication. It would be easy to assume that these dances were published later as they were collected later, but this it not the case. It is worth noting that only Douglas' name appears on this volume in relation to the collection and notation of the dances. Foster had once again provided the piano arrangements to accompany the dances, but, as we shall see later,

Douglas notated the dances and submitted them without proof reading, and therefore without the interference or opinions of any others. In the correspondence between Douglas and Foster regarding the first volume, many of the piano arrangements for these dances were already ready, but for some reason they were omitted until this publication. It seems reasonable to hypothesise, therefore, that Douglas had more control over this volume.

It does seem odd that Douglas somewhat contradicts this in the foreword to the volume in which she recognises the work of the MFDS in helping with the publication of the volume. But Manx dance was in a very different situation in 1953 to when the first volume was published. Manx dance was healthy, taught by a number of teachers and part of the physical education classes in many schools. It is also worth noting that Foster was still profiting from the world famous Dirk Dance, as an advertisement for an orchestral arrangement of the music to the dance appears on the back cover of the volume. The synonymous nature of Manx dance and the Dirk Dance can also be seen by the perpetuation of the use of the illustration used for the front cover, that again of the Dirk Dancer performing the final salute. There is no documentary evidence to imply that Foster was in any way as keen to produce the second volume. It seems that the iron of the Dirk Dance was considerably cooler. This was to be the final volume in the series. It is not known why, when ten dances were ready for publication in 1945, only seven were included.

#### **4.3 The Manx Folk Dance Society**

The 1951 Festival of Britain gave Manx dance a huge boost with dance groups forming all over the Island. Although Stowell had left Albert Road School in 1937 it continued to be a centre for Manx dance and Miss Davies of Kirk Michael brought together this group for Albert Road's contribution to the festivities:



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##### **4.3.1 Albert Road Dance team 1952 (MNHL PG7076/25).**



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#### **4.3.2 Manx Folk Dance Society Members (MNHL PG5950/2).**

Bearing in mind Stowell's distinct deviations in artistic styles and opinions as seen in the correspondence between Douglas and Cain, it may come as no surprise that in 1951 the Manx Folk Dance Society was founded, very much along the same structure as its English counterpart, with Stowell as a founding member. The group had originally come together under the title 'the Festival Dancers' formed to dance at the Festival of Britain in 1951. They were asked to dance at a number of events around the Isle of Man, including the Tynwald ceremonies, and that year they formed the MFDS. With a rigid structure of committee and sub committees the founding members were as follows (MFDS: 2000):

Chairman: Mr J.A. Woods  
Secretary: Miss C.M. Griffiths  
Treasurer: Mr W. Cain  
District representatives:  
North: Mr W. Clark, Miss M. Verdun  
South: Mr Leighton Stowell, Miss E. Maddrell  
East: Mrs F. Moore, Miss D. Larsen  
West: Mrs Munn, Miss E. Roberts  
Librarian: Miss Sheila Taggart  
Auditor: Mr Eric Hanson

Subcommittees:  
1: Costume  
2: Selection of dance team members  
3: Dance notation

There is a conspicuous absence of the name Mona Douglas on the above list. As the person who had collected the dances and arranged for their demonstration, published their notes and given many papers on the subject, one could be forgiven for assuming that she too would have been a founding member. This was not the case. In correspondence between Griffiths and Douglas late in 1951 it can be seen that Douglas was invited to join the notation sub committee, although it was also noted that she had not yet submitted a membership form, a formality that would have to be fulfilled before admission onto the sub-committee. Later that month Douglas was invited to teach some Manx dancing, and again asked for her membership form, which may imply that Douglas was in some way reticent to become a member. Stowell was elected Chairman of the MFDS in 1952. In 1953 the MFDS committee took responsibility for the retail of the two volumes of Manx dances *Five Manx Folk Dances: Set I* (1936) and *Seven Manx Folk Dances: Set II* (1953) both of which had dance notation supplied by Douglas. The society continued to perform at events both on the Isle of Man and internationally. Stephen Newbold had become the regular Dirk Dancer and was a member of the Society. In the same year a national team which included Stowell was selected to travel to these events.

1954 saw Stowell's resignation from the society. There is no given explanation for this, although in undated correspondence to Douglas, Stowell states that he had been told not to exercise for a year after suffering a back injury. It is possible that these two events are related but this remains purely speculation. It is evident from the book on the society's history that English and Scottish dance was a regular feature of their classes and performances. To be selected for the national team proficiency in English and Manx dances had to be displayed and classes were held around the Island, including one in Douglas in Scottish dancing.

Dancing was obviously very popular with a steady increase in the opportunities for Manx dancers to perform on the Isle of Man. The carnival in Douglas provides evidence for this in 1954 with large crowds watching an enormous dance group performing processional dances.



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#### **4.3.3 Manx Folk Dance Society at Douglas Carnival 1954 (MNHL PG7041/8)**

The international nature of Manx dances is highlighted by Giovannelli's trip to Brazil in 1954 to present a paper entitled 'Manx Dances as recorded from traditional dancers and as used in modern education by the Manx Folk Dance Society' at the seventh international folk music conference in Sao Paulo. It is not known why he was chosen to give the paper and not Douglas, but it is unsurprising to learn that the main dance to be performed was the Dirk Dance, as well as Car Juan Nan. To save on the expense of transporting nine dancers plus musicians to Brazil, a film was made of the performances and a recording of the music to illustrate the paper. (MNHL 9545 Box 5)

In 1955 a number of events took place which clearly demonstrate the relationship between Douglas and the MFDS. Firstly, as the first volume of Manx dances had been dedicated to the lieutenant governor's wife, Lady Butler, Douglas wanted to dedicate the next volume to the newly crowned Queen of England. As this was not advised, she was to present a bound volume of each copy on the occasion of a royal visit to the Isle of Man, in the hope this would lead to a royal dedication of the third volume. While this could not be done in person and could not appear to be a personal gift, the volume was inscribed as being presented by 'The Folk Dancers of Mann'. This seems a reasonable inscription until a note in the history of the MFDS is taken into account:

##### 1955

In July 1955 Miss Mona Douglas wished to purchase the 2 books – '7 Manx Dances' & '5 Manx Dances', to present in a bound copy to Her Majesty the Queen. The Manx Folk Dance Society decided that their contribution should be to provide them free of charge.

(MFDS: 2000 p.5)

It would seem more reasonable to have inscribed the copy 'from the Manx Folk Dance Society' as they had donated the books, but it should be taken into account that they were books by Douglas. They were both volumes of dances collected and notated by her and published in conjunction with Arnold Foster, who arranged the music she collected and noted. It can therefore only be interpreted as insulting that not only were the society contemplating charging her for her own books, but that they felt it worthy of documenting that *they* had kindly donated them.

This was not the first time Douglas had been insulted by the society's lack of tact, as earlier in the year she had received note that a meeting of the Dance Notation Sub-committee was to be held. Douglas had evidently relented and submitted her membership form and was expected to attend a meeting in Douglas to check the notation of *Five Manx Folk Dances* and *Seven Manx Folk Dances* and make any necessary corrections, and also to work on the notation of the Manx Jig and Car ny Ferrishyn. As previously discussed, Douglas had authored the books of Manx dances, had worked on the notation with other dancers and members of the EFDSS and had published them as complete. Also, both the Manx Jig and Car Ny Ferrishyn as named above were versions of dances collected by Douglas, but then either altered or composed by Stowell himself. It caused great confusion that Stowell continued to call them by the names used by Douglas for her collected dances, and also was to cause considerable question as to the origin of the dances. Douglas was understandably insulted and wasted no time in informing the society of their *faux pas* in a letter by reply:

23/2/1955

However, I don't think it is likely to make much difference if I am not there. I should not, naturally, be able to help at all over Mr Stowell's two dances, and should think you had better get the notation for these from himself. I would suggest, however, that as they are both so very different from the original notations that I made, they should in future be called by different names, performed to other music, and in fact treated as the composed dances which in effect they are.

I am rather disturbed by the wording of your first item on the agenda, but perhaps I have misunderstood it. As you know, the published notations were well 'vetted' before printing, the first volume by Edith Jones and EFDSS and the second by your own committee and later by the EFDSS. Not all the dances in this second volume were actually noted with the committee, as if you remember the meetings were stopped before we had finished all the dances, and I had to send the rest in my own notation in order to get on with the publication. All of them, however, were carefully gone over before the final printing by William Ganiford and other prominent members of the EFDSS, in association with Arnold Foster, and as a result of this 'vetting'. Some alterations were made to your notation (which I submitted just as it reached me, not even typing it), as being unworkable, or liable to be misunderstood, from a teaching point of view without visual demonstration. I had hoped to show you proofs before the book was finally printed, but owing to the employment of a new process no proofs were submitted, and I think there are one or two very minor misprints; but apart from these (which are what I hope you mean by corrections) I could not now agree to any alterations in the published dances, as this would constitute an infringement of copyright.

(MNHL 9545 Box 19)

It is evident from Stowell's 1972 paper on his composition of Manx dances, that he took heed of Douglas' request to alter the names and tunes to these dances, although in his section on the Manx Jig he says that this was his idea, making no mention of Douglas' request.

It can be seen in Douglas' notes that she did not agree with other decisions made by the MFDS, although she is aware that they were doing great work to re-popularise Manx dance. She described them as teaching 'foreign' dances as well as Manx dances, and as only teaching the simpler Manx dances in schools. She was aware, however, that they were regularly simplifying the dances as they were deemed too difficult for children, instead they advocated teaching simple English country dances before embarking on the more difficult Manx ones. Douglas disagreed with this, especially as the dances had first been performed by elderly men and women, had been taught to her as a child and then reconstructed using a junior school dance team.

Links between the MFDS and EFDS continued and once again, in 1956 the EFDS held a vacation school on the Isle of Man. All forms of English dances were included, as well as some Manx dancing, which at the time was deemed the most strenuous of all (MNHL 9545 Box 5). Douglas was involved in that she gave a paper on Manx dance, but the week was evidently aimed towards English dancing.

By 1957 Manx dances seemed to have gained serious recognition with large companies of people taking part, such as in the photograph below:



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#### 4.3.4 Peter O'Tavy performed *en masse* at a 1957 Carnival event.

(MNHL PG7041/12)

Stowell was still dancing and here he can be seen pictured with his Castle Rushen Folk Dancers, a group of adults.



By kind permission of Manx National Heritage.

#### 4.3.5 'Castle Rushen Folk Dancers 1957'. (MNHL PGPG4969/1)

By this point, the canon, the context and even the actual physical texts had been removed from Douglas' control and a community, the MFDS, very closely linked with EFDS was the main body influencing the Manx dance canon at this point. Their own aesthetic and moral ideals were being imposed on material that had been intended for another community, ostensibly the modern folk. Texts were questioned and altered accordingly. The inclusion of texts of questionable provenance, such as the dances of Stowell with very similar names and tune, but that were clearly composed, meant that the canon as a whole comes under question. There was a community still surrounding the collector, however, as it is evident that Douglas' youth group, while not nearly as prolific as the MFDS in performances of Manx dance during the 1950s, was using the same dances as texts and was even competing against the MFDS in the annual Manx Music Festival Country Dancing Competitions.

In 1960, however, Manx dance was not as widespread as Douglas had hoped. While there were many dancers performing, they were dancing within the strict structure of the MFDS. Manx dance had become an important part of cultural events such as Tynwald, but it had not yet taken its place as the dominant folk dance on the Isle of Man.



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**4.3.6. Maypole Dancing at the 1960 crowning of the Festival Queen in Castletown Square. (MNHL 09683).**

## **Chapter 5: The Final Figure**

### **5.1 The 1970s Manx Cultural Revival**

The 1970s saw a revival of interest in all things Manx. The socio-political climate of the Isle of Man saw increased immigration from the UK and elsewhere and the minoritising of the Manx born, which induced a move to assert the Manx identity in every way. The Manx language was, at this point, in a very precarious position with only a handful of native speakers. There was little traditional music to speak of and Manx dance, whilst visible, was very much the domain of the MFDS and was not often used in a community context (Woolley: 2003).

Mona Douglas was integral to much of this revival movement. In the short-lived journal *Manninagh* of which she was an editor, she wrote an article entitled 'Can We Re-popularise Manx Music and Dance' (1973). While Douglas recognised that the dances were regularly performed by the MFDS and EFDSS, she was aware that they had not yet entered the community as she had hoped when she began collecting in the first decades of the century. Using France, Norway and Italy as examples Douglas felt that it was imperative to integrate Manx dances among the popular dances of the time, and not just save them for displays. Manx dance, in Douglas' view, should be a spontaneous activity, the realm of the young at parties and ballrooms. She did not agree that the dances should be taught in lessons, but that they should be part of the school day. Each child should be taught Manx dances so as to be able to join in with adults at community gatherings. Douglas was vehemently against the idea that Manx dances were too difficult for children and thought that the dumbing down of the dances for young children was giving Manx dance a negative reputation which was putting young people off. Douglas wanted the dances to belong to the 'folk' once again. Douglas was still teaching Aeglagh Vannin Manx dances and it was evident that other dance groups off the island, such as Woodfidley, were also performing them (MNHL 9545 Box 7).

The MFDS were still active and regularly seen performing at events across the island as well as travelling away to festivals and events. They continued to compose new dances and in 1973 produced a vinyl LP of dance music. This LP was to be one of the first recordings dedicated to Manx traditional music and demonstrates clearly the inter-relationship between music and dance on the Isle of Man. The LP has the music for eighteen dances, played on violin, harp, tin whistle and 'cello as arranged by Charles Guard: Hop tu Naa, Guilley Hesheree, Dirk Dance, Chyndaa yn Bwoailley, Mylecharaine's March, Jemmy as Nancy, Fathaby Jig, Illiam y Thaelear, Car ny Rankee, Eunyssagh Vona, Hunt the Wren, Car y Phoosee, Men's Jig, Peter O'Tavy, Car Juan Nan, Mheillea, Cutting the Turf and Car ny Ferrishyn. Of all of these dances, only one is a MFDS or Stowell composition, and the majority are known to have been collected by Douglas in the 1920s and 30s.

By the later 1970s the Manx revival was fully underway. The manuscript collections of John Clague had been rediscovered in the Manx Museum Library, and an edition for Manx musicians had been prepared by Colin Jerry (Jerry: 1978). The Manx language was growing in strength with many of the musicians and political activists taking up the cause and speaking Manx. Douglas' collected material was consulted as singing in Manx was becoming more commonplace. An informal music session under the name 'Celtic Traditions' was taking place regularly at the Glen Helen pub, but as with dance, was mainly concerned with all music of the British Isles and had little Manx content. However, the music of the Clague Collection was slowly introduced and in the later 70s the session moved to 'the Central' in Peel and changed its name to 'Bwoie Doal' after one of Clague's informants, Tom Kermode.

At the same time a group of dancers from the MFDS were becoming dissatisfied with the dances they were performing. Their awareness of other dances prompted them to find something more Manx. They consulted Douglas and her original notes and began to learn the dances she had collected and as she had collected them. The venues for the beginnings of this alternate dance movement vary according to different sources, but included places as glamorous as the old Peel Kipper Yard and empty function rooms in hotels. In 1977 the dance group Bock Yuan Fannee was formed. Very much influenced by Douglas, this group of young men also wanted to take dancing back for the people. They rejected the 'national costume' as used by the MFDS and originally came together to practise the sword and stick dances for a single event. (Woolley: 2003)



By kind permission of Manx National Heritage.

#### **5.1.1 An early incarnation of Bock Yuan Fannee practising the White Boys Sword Dance (MNHL 9545).**

It was during this period of instruction that it became evident that Douglas was not quite as sure of the dances as she might have been. Carswell described the slight discrepancies in Douglas' recollections:

In the early 1970s, when a group from the Manx Folk Dance Society were trying to learn some further dances, Mona would come along so that she could advise us. We would try it one way and Mona would tell us that was right. Then we would try it a different way, and Mona would tell us that was right as well. The notes were not always clear, and neither was Mona's direction when we looked for it. Something similar happened in the late 1970s when Bock Yuan Fannee, a Manx dance group, was learning 'Shooyl Inneeny' and 'Moirrey ny Gainle.'

(Carswell: 2004)

However, the dance group Bock Yuan Fannee continued to grow, becoming a mixed group and dancing at events around the island.

1977 also saw the revival, again at the hands of Douglas, of the Manx national festival Yn Chruinnaght. A weekend event was held in Ramsey and then in 1978 a full festival took place. This festival was to prove to be an opportunity for Manx dancers to come together, from the Isle of Man and further afield (for example the Woodfidley dance group from England) in a Manx context and not to perform Manx dances in the context of an English or country dancing festival or competition. Yn Chruinnaght held annual dance competitions and this was to prove to be the impetus for many newly composed dances, as well as developments in style and costume.



By kind permission of Manx National Heritage.

#### **5.1.2 Members of Bock Yuan Fannee performing Fathaby Jig at an early Yn Chruinnaght festival (MNHL 9545).**

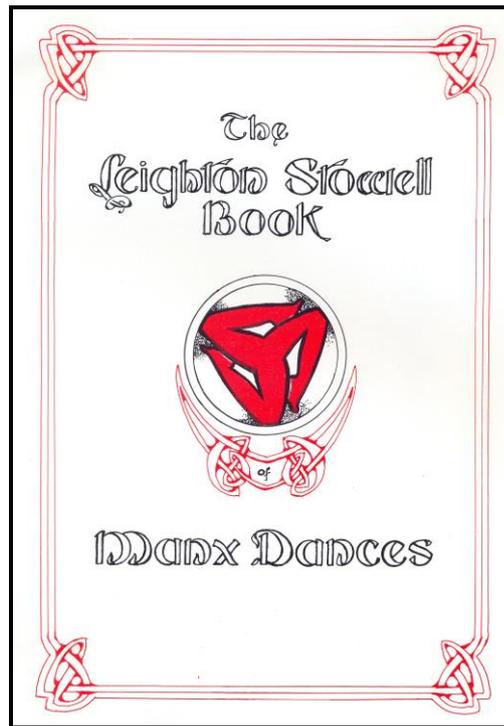
Yn Chruinnaght is an inter-Celtic festival and as such invites performers from Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall, Brittany and Wales. Douglas was a regular member of the Celtic Congress from its very early years and was aware that cultural revivals were taking place across the Celtic world. As a result Manx dance moved away from the English country dance movement and firmly allied itself with Celtic dance. This new generation of young Manx dancers travelled to festivals to perform Manx dances in an inter-Celtic context elsewhere. It is worth noting that while Bock Yuan Fannee was in essence a rejection of the restrictive nature of the MFDS, they carried with them many of the dances composed by Stowell and the MFDS and added these to those collected by Douglas. The photograph below shows two men from Bock Yuan Fannee performing the dance Gorse Sticks, as composed by Stowell, at the Festival Interceltique de Cornemuse, Brittany.



By kind permission of Manx National Heritage.

### **5.1.3 Bock Yuan Fannee performing Gorse Sticks in Brittany (MNHL PG7741).**

During this period the community surrounding Manx dance altered considerably from that of folk dancers who included Manx dances in their repertoire to that of cultural activists who were including dance in the formation of their new cultural and political identity. The context for the performances of these dance altered also, moving from the context of the English country and morris dancers to the Celtic revival and inter-Celtic political statement. The platform for their performance also altered from the carnival and state occasion to home-run festivals and ceilis. Even though the canon swayed more towards the dances collected by Douglas, dances composed by Stowell and the MFDS were added to what became a canon of common dances. In turn, this new community and context brought about the creation of new texts unknown to the MFDS or original community. There were now, then, two canons, both with a common overlap.



#### 5.1.4 Front cover of *The Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances* 1981

The early 1980s saw the creation of two very important canon-forming texts. In 1981 the MFDS published *The Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances* with accompanying tape. This book contains nine dances, eight of which composed by Stowell, and one collected by him. Although the processes for the composition of these dances were published by Stowell in 1972 in *Manninagh*, none of that information found its way into the book. The book included a foreword by Douglas outlining the history of their collaboration, and here it notes that the dances are composed or 'compiled', as Stowell would term it. However, if dances are associated with some element of folklore, which provided the inspiration for the dance, this is included in the notes. What is not clearly stated, though, is whether this was merely the inspiration and to the casual browser seems to imply that the dance is associated with that tradition and so is traditional. This book was published 'in memoriam' of Stowell from his unpublished notes by the MFDS notation sub-committee.

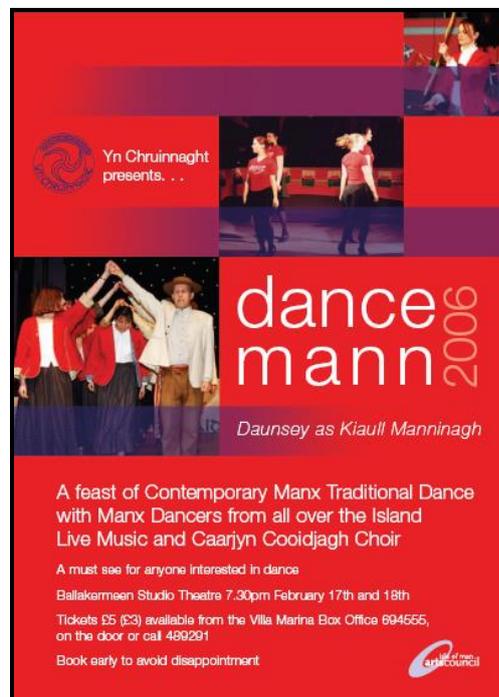


#### 5.1.5 Front cover of *Rinkaghyn Vannin* 1983.

Two years later, in 1983, Sleih Gyn Thie, a group associated with Bock Yuan Fannee, in consultation with Douglas published *Rinkaghyn Vannin* a collection of all the dances collected by Douglas, with one addition, a newly composed dance 'Dance for Five'. The volume contains twenty-eight dances, as well as complementary material such as the plays associated with the White Boys and the Boat Supper. Only thirteen of these dances had been published before, so fifteen of these were 'new'. However, for many of them notes had previously existed, some incomplete and others are known to have been completed in the interim, such as Mheillea, while others remain a mystery. The Dirk Dance is no longer given pride of place and the notes are included near the back of the book, illustrating the move from display dances to group and social dances in the new canon. The book begins with a description of steps and the works through the simpler dances, ending with the most complex and then the more unusual and ritual based. Each dance is accompanied by a single-line tune and a short note on its traditional relevance. Frustratingly, especially in the case of those of no known origin, no notes are given on informants in the main, although each one is clearly stated as being collected by Douglas. The book was published with the help of Bock Yuan Fannee members who went through Douglas' notes with her and decided which ones to include. One dancer recollects 'discovering' Purl Cubbleby in Douglas' piano stool. This relationship with the dance group is illustrated by the lack of Douglas' name on the cover and the depiction of two of the dancers spinning.

## **5.2 Manx Dance Today**

Manx dance today is vibrant and healthy. Out of Bock Yuan Fannee grew two other dance groups, Ny Fennee and Perree Bane. In very recent years, Perree Bane also gave rise to a splinter group of young girls who, in the post-Riverdance climate of Celtic dance, rejected the traditional costumes and chosen more experimental and contemporary approach to their choreography. The MFDS is still prevalent and still performs many of the dances composed by Stowell as well as dances composed more recently. They still travel regularly to festivals and events and play host to foreign folk dancers such as those from Sweden. This means that there are five fully subscribed and stylistically individual dance groups. Yn Chruinnaght is still a major part of the cultural calendar, and although the dance competitions and the Woodfidley Trophy have not been apparent for a short while, a full evening's entertainment has taken its place under the title DanceMann.



### **5.2.1 DanceMann promotional poster.**

At the first DanceMann in 2006, Perree Bane, Perree T, Ny Fennee and the MFDS performed alongside one another in a professional level performance for a paying audience in the Studio Theatre in Ballakermeen Highschool. Bock Yuan Fannee were unable to take part as they had a prior engagement. This venture gave each dance group the opportunity to show to the full their skill, individual styles and choreographical innovations. However, regardless of the individuality of each group, there was still the problem of repertoire. Each group had to meet together to decide who was going to do which dance to avoid any repetition. Each group had a full compliment of newly composed dances to choose from, but the traditional dances were

evenly spread between them, although on the one occasion where there was duplication, the dances were performed in such a stylised way as to make them unrecognisable to the untrained eye as the same dance. Each group has their own canon of dances, although there is still a common canon between them all. This common canon appears to be centred around the dances as published in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* with a few from *The Leighton Stowell Book of Dances* although the MFDS still favour the latter. It would seem that this common canon is a direct descendant of the common canon formed during the revival of the 1970s.

Manx dance is still common in schools, with Albert Road School in Ramsey still a centre of Manx dance and music. However, it is interesting to note that the tutors of dance there would class themselves as descended from the Douglas repertoire and style and not allied with the Stowell school. The MFDS are still doing sterling work to encourage dances in schools producing resource packs of recorded music and videos for school use. It is worth noting, however, that some of these dances have been simplified and that in some schools English country dances are still taught first as they are deemed less difficult for children. Government-funded support for Manx music and dance from the Manx Heritage Foundation, Isle of Man Arts Council and Department of Tourism and Leisure are now offered. A recent film demonstrating the nation-branding initiative even includes the dance group Perree T.



By kind permission of Manx National Heritage.

### **5.2.2 A modern White Boy at the annual 'Mollag Ghennal' celebrations.**

(MNHL PG7019/3)

Ceilis are becoming a regular part of everyday life with corporate events and weddings quickly overtaking cultural events as the main source of activity for the island's four ceili bands in recent years. While Manx dance is not spontaneously called for in the modern day ballrooms as Douglas had dreamed, young people on the Isle of Man do regularly come into

contact with Manx dance and it has become a normalised part of Manx society. The author has witnessed the spontaneous performance of Chyndaa yn Bwoailley by two young women at a party when it became apparent that a traditional musician was present. The girls called for the dance by name and, when questioned, explained that they had learnt the dance at primary school and felt it important that they knew Manx dances as it was part of their identity.

So it would be simple to assume that Manx dance was revived and now a normal part of Manx life, just as Douglas had wanted. But this is not necessarily the case. Manx dance is still little known outside of the Isle of Man, and is often mistaken for Irish or Scottish dancing by the uninitiated. The internet gives very little information on Manx dancing with quotes such as that which opened this study doing little to support Manx dance's credibility in the folk dance world. Most surprising is the attitude that many Manx dancers themselves have of Manx dancing. The official Dirk Dancer recently programmed a dance performance to include three solo male dances in chronological order; Dirk Dance, Gorse Sticks then Men's Jig. When questioned he explained that the Dirk Dance was ancient, Gorse sticks was based on an old collected dance and Men's jig had been collected by Douglas and so probably was not as old (personal communication). In another interview a Manx dancer told the author that they had helped compose Bwoaill Baccagh when there are evidently notes and the names of informants given that pre-date this occasion. It would seem that Douglas' involvement in the dance revival as an old woman coupled with the myth building and occasional creative liberties taken by Stowell has resulted in cynicism in relation to the material collected by Douglas.

In 2000 a once day seminar was held on the revival and dissemination of Manx folklore and traditions took place on the Isle of Man. The title of the conference 'Completed and Restored to Use' was taken from the 1937 paper by Mona Douglas on the collection of Manx dances. This seminar purported to be a critical examination of the revival of Manx culture, in particular the work of Douglas.

Collect she certainly did, no one denies that, but what and when, remain open issues. Similarly, what was elaborated from her own collecting, and, particularly, what was either pure surmise or simple invention of her own.'

(Miller: 2004)

The introduction to the proceedings of the conference written by Miller implies a high level of cynicism as to the 'authenticity' of the dances that were collected, and almost as an afterthought, of the music and lyrics as well. As we have seen a large number of the dances appear to have been collected from any number of informants. Douglas was not a dancer, a fact illustrated by her need for Stowell in the early days of interpretation, and so it would seem unlikely that she could have had much of a creative input. How Manx the dances were in the first place cannot be known. Some of them are mentioned in documentary sources,

such as the White Boys, Mheillea, etc. but we cannot know if these are the same movements and steps. It is distinctly possible that Douglas collected dances that were being made up on the spot in front of her, but the dance did come from somewhere and that somewhere appears in all likelihood to be from informants via Douglas' notebook. But why question this? When Douglas has no reason to create these dances and many of them have now been published for eighty years, why question the validity of her work? And why not question the validity of Stowell's work?

The answer would seem to come in Carswell's paper given at the seminar day. We have already seen how Douglas was prone to agreeing with whatever she was shown, but if we take a look at the entirety of the previous quote we begin to see why the origin of Manx dances are now questioned:

In the early 1970s, when a group from the Manx Folk Dance Society were trying to learn some further dances, Mona would come along so that she could advise us. We would try it one way and Mona would tell us that was right. Then we would try it a different way, and Mona would tell us that was right as well. The notes were not always clear, and neither was Mona's direction when we looked for it. Something similar happened in the late 1970s when Bock Yuan Fannee, a Manx dance group, was learning 'Shooyl Inneenyn' and 'Moirrey ny Gainle.' This was evidently a feature of the original teaching in 1928-29 and subsequently when further dances were put together in Albert Road School. I think Marjorie Coates, Mrs Marjorie Crowe, puts it very succinctly: that Mona 'favoured the essence of Manx dancing.' This she contrasts with the approach of Leighton Stowell, 'who had a more precise and perfectionist view of dancing.'

(Carswell: 2004)

It seems that Douglas' actions in her latter years are transposed onto the documentary evidence of her behaviour as a young woman. While Carswell's argument is a strong one, it is well documented that the memory deteriorates over time. If Douglas could not remember what had happened fifty or sixty years ago when asked by young dancers who held her in a position of esteem, this does not mean that she could not remember what had happened a few months ago when she was in her twenties and thirties. While it may be true that Douglas favoured the essence of Manx dance, this does not mean that this was all she could remember. The other side of that quote is that Stowell had a more perfectionist and precise way of dancing and so it is possible that these arguments that took place were not because Douglas could not remember the dance, but that Stowell was trying to alter it to fit his own aesthetic norm and so losing the 'essence' of Manx dancing. It is also the difference between social dancing as Douglas remembered it and display dancing. The former does not *need* to be as precise as the latter.

And so why is Stowell not questioned in the same way? There is substantial evidence that he had a tendency to bend the truth when it suited him, was often known to alter the Manx dances to his own taste, composed dances to the tunes and names of partially collected ones, and even misled his own daughter as to the sequence of events that surrounded the

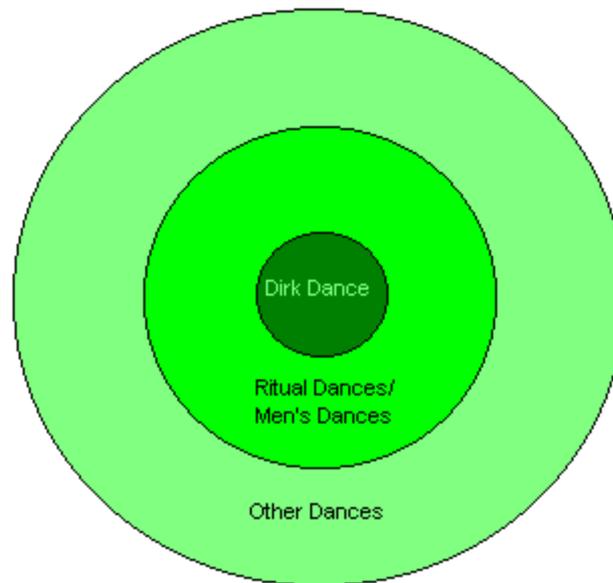
collection of Manx dances. It seems likely that this questioning, or lack of, is due in main to the nature of the contact between the main figure and their surrounding community. Within the community of the MFDS Stowell's actions were in no way unusual. They were English folk dancers as well as Manx and so the aesthetic ideals, the composed dances and the status of Stowell was not questioned. It is also worth noting that Stowell died in 1978, just as the cultural revival was getting going. Douglas, by way of contrast, was involved in a community striving for authenticity to bolster its claims of a distinct cultural identity. She was regularly questioned on her dances, especially as an older woman, by those now leading the academic study of Manx dance. Her biography outlines that she was deemed an oddity at times, with highly idiosyncratic ways, and the actions of an elderly lady have been superimposed on her actions as a young woman (Carswell: 2004, Bazin: 1998 & 2006).

### **5.3 Conclusions**

By exploring the history of Manx dance, not as a revival, but rather as a series of canon forming events, the question of authenticity is automatically displaced. Instead, the relationships between the texts used, the way in which they are treated by different communities and the context in which these communities use them to create canons offer a far more useful perspective on the events that took place and the resulting nature of the modern Manx dance canon.

From this study a number of crucial events can be seen as having taken place which have affected Manx dance as it is today, but it is important to remember that a number of the texts involved have remained relatively unchanged for nearly a century now.

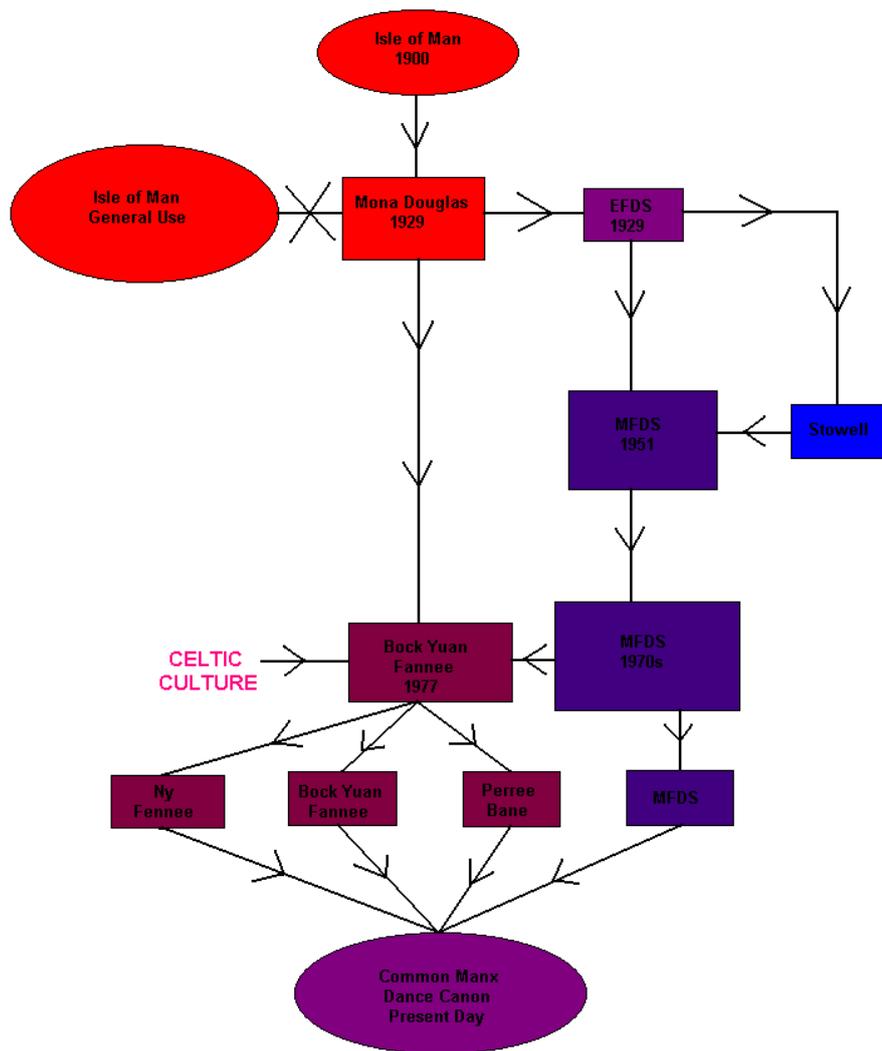
This study has identified an original canon of dances as known to the populace of the Isle of Man. The community of Douglas' informants was a dwindling one, and so the common canon was very small; only a few dances were known to everyone. There were also some individual specific texts that were collected. These came together to make up a group of texts specific to Douglas that were meant for release for general use by the populace of the Isle of Man. However, when Douglas collaborated with Stowell the texts were exposed to a whole new community. This new community, that of the English Folk Dance Society, had their own aesthetic norms and these were slowly imposed upon the texts of Manx dance and went on to affect the formation of the canon. This canon was dominated by the existence of the Dirk Dance and all other texts within the canon were subordinate to it. Those highest placed were the ritual and male dances, viz a viz those closest in style to the English tradition, and the mixed dances, social dances and specifically Manx dances were least valued.



**5.3.1 Manx dance canon 1929 onward. Dirk Dance at centre as of high importance.**

The canon was then augmented by Stowell with his created dances, again with the aesthetic influence and canon-forming decisions of the EFDS community. This community then developed into the MFDS, essentially a Manx branch of the EFDS who still favoured the English style in many ways. Manx dances were made peripheral as they were deemed too difficult and to enter the main body of the canon had to adapt accordingly. Much artistic influence was exerted by Stowell, as could be seen with the introduction of theatrical 'honouring' at the beginning of each dance, something not collected from the original community.

The community surrounding this anglicised Manx dance canon began to alter with the changing political climate on the Isle of Man. There was a rejection of the anglicised forms and a desired return to the 'real' Manx way of dancing. This altered the aesthetic criteria for a dance to enter the canon. These aesthetic criteria were based on a rejection of what was deemed English, a positive influence from other Celtic dance forms and the re-appraisal of Douglas' original source material. A new canon was formed based more around the original texts with some texts taken from the MFDS canon. These texts were then taken by individual dance groups to form mini group-specific canons. These canons have all been added to over time, each with slightly different aesthetic criteria dependent on the group. These mini canons all overlap at some point, however, forming a new canon recognisable to all Manx dancers. It is mainly this canon that the people of the Isle of Man now draw upon for dances that identify their culture and identity as performable and social dances.



**5.3.2 Flow diagram showing the development of the Common Manx Dance Canon of the Present Day**

It seems likely, then, that Douglas did collect a number of dances from a number of informants. These were then interpreted, as any group of instructions are, by herself and Stowell. Upon demonstration to the EFDS both Stowell and Douglas lost any real control of the canon. Stowell made an indelible mark on the style of Manx dancing, but the body of dances accepted and promoted was entirely at the mercy of the English audience. Such was the success of the Dirk Dance, that it eclipsed all other Manx dances and led to the use of Manx dances for commercial reasons. This in turn led to a decision by Douglas to relinquish all of her rights over the dances and in doing so losing the original notes. Through a number of disagreements the dances became the main concern of Stowell and the MFDS and

Douglas had little to do with them. Stowell composed many dances and they became 'traditional'. In the 1970s a number of dancers moved away from the MFDS and Stowell's way of dancing and turned once again to Douglas. However, much time had passed and the reliability of her material came into question. Two volumes of Manx dances were published, one of Stowell's dances, who had already passed on and so was beyond tactful question, the other by Douglas. The dancers who now remember Douglas remember her as an old woman and remember the process by which this book was published. Their closeness to Douglas gives them a legitimate position to question her as a familiar figure in their lives.

While this study provides a potted history of the revival of the dances associated with the Isle of Man before the cultural revival of the 1970s and offers some findings on how we come to dance the dances we do today, there is still much to be studied. The research for this dissertation has exposed many sources ripe for exploration. These include many visual representations of dancers throughout the twentieth century, which will shed a great deal of light on the style of Manx dancing throughout this period. These also provide material for a study of the separate movements of each dance and how the individual dances have evolved over time. These visual representations will also give an insight into the costumes used by Manx dancers since their first performances as 'folk dance' and the aesthetic decisions surrounding these would maintain a substantial study alone. It is now known where Manx dance as it is today came from, but whether or not these dances originated on the Isle of Man or were imported or imposed, in essence how Manx these dances really are, still remains to be seen.

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# 1. Rinkaghyn Vannin

## 1.1 Hop tu Naa

It is well documented that music and dances have often been a feature of Hop tu Naa celebrations on the Isle of Man. Along with the battle between Summer and Winter Gill links the tradition with the importing of Mumming and Hogmanay. In the *Journal of the Folk Dance Society* (1924) Gilchrist categorises the song as 'Connected with customs' and again links it to Hogmanay, but there is no mention of the associated dance.

Mona Douglas is evidently very aware of the Hop tu Naa customs as outlined in an essay found in her papers (MNHL 09545 Box 5):

When the boys beat the bounds – they would sing the Hop tu Naa song and perform the processional dance that goes with it. In recent years, they would carry turnip lanterns, but before turnips were introduced to the Island, about 1830, torches would be used in the dance. In country districts there was no beating of bounds, but the dancers carried round vegetables and at every house they would knock on the door and leave some of them.

It is evident that Douglas believes there to be great antiquity linked with this dance if it pre-dates the turnip, although there is no documentary evidence for this. It is also questionable as to whether it is possible to perform the dance holding a flaming torch, let alone a turnip lantern.

Philip Leighton Stowell is also very aware of the traditions associated with Hop tu Naa, although not as exact in his descriptions. Within his papers is a lecture, one of a series of at least 17, on Hop tu Naa (MD09683: 1959). He begins by stating quite clearly that the name is a corruption of 'Hop! Ta'n Oie' or 'this is the night' but then goes on to link the rite with druids (who incidentally appear to have access to turnips despite their later introduction to the island) and witches, but there is no mention of the dance at all.

References to the dance are not so easy to untangle. No early notes can be found, although the dance appears in the 1936 publication of *5 Manx Folk Dances* as a hollantide processional collected by Douglas. It is then discussed in a paper given by Mona Douglas in 1937 as one of the few dances completed so far. Again it is described as a processional dance, danced through Douglas on Hollantide (12 November) to the accompaniment of the song by groups of four carrying turnip lanterns and torches. This is all as it is today. However, in 1940 the story is a little different. In a lecture recital to Rushen Internment Camp the dance is described as being a lively processional as part of the lantern procession through Old Douglas on Hollantide, but it is also stated that the dance was also used as part of the procession to carry home the Mheillea or to escort the carts to the annual turf cutting. This variety of use is reiterated in a paper written by Douglas for the *Scottish Anthropological*

Society in 1948 where the dance, un-named, is described as being associated with carrying the Mheillea, accompanying the turf carts, part of a lantern procession on Hollantide as well as the annual hiring fair and marching the fishing crews to the boat supper. However, it is evident that the link with Hollantide and Hop tu Naa is fully created by 1950 with Stenning's description of the tradition of Hop tu Naa.

The waters are muddied again, however, when in her papers, Douglas refers to a processional dance, unnamed, reconstructed by Stowell from descriptions and partial demonstrations in Jurby (MNHL 09545 Box 5). This is further confused in another essay by Douglas in which she refers to a dance called 'Hie Mee Stiagh', a general processional dance, with a distinctly similar description to that given in relation to Hop tu Naa for the Scottish Anthropological society (MNHL 09545 Box 1).

However, the most common title associated with dance is Hop Tu Naa. In Douglas' papers can be found manuscript music to 'Hop tu Naa (processional)'. On the LP produced by the MFDS *Daunsyn Theayagh Vannin* (1973) the dance is called Hop tu Naa and related to dancing round the bounds on Hollantide (12 November) carrying turnip lanterns. Again in a leaflet of dances produced by the MFDS the dance is Hop tu Naa and connected with Hollantide.

Interestingly, in 1983 with the production of *Rinkaghyn Vannin*, a publication predominantly associated with Douglas and her dances, the story is a little fuller again. This time the dance is associated with Hop tu Naa, although at its new date of 31<sup>st</sup> October, with couples dancing through the streets bearing turnip lanterns. However, Douglas states that there are two versions of the dance, one collected by Stowell, the other by herself, which is the one danced today. However, there is no indication given as to where this dance was collected.

What this second dance collected by Stowell is, we may never know. There are other references to a dance called Hie Mee Stiagh which would be in keeping with this processional as it is at times connected with the turf carts, but this is confused by Stowell's composition of a dance also called Hie Mee Stiagh and performed to a tune of the same name. Stowell also composed a processional dance Daunse Straid and it is equally possible that this dance is made up of collected fragments noted by Stowell.

It would seem likely that Douglas collected a processional dance, connected with a number of customs and calendar celebrations. As a simple processional dance it would be used for any procession and was not connected with one specific calendar custom. However, upon the need for publication a name would have to be settled on, and as a well known calendar custom would give the dance more historical credence it would seem reasonable to settle on that element of the dance for publication purposes. However, it is also interesting to note that

the date of Hop tu Naa or Hollantide alters during the development of the dance, illustrating the difficulty with pinpointing historical references to traditions and customs.

The dance as it is performed today is a popular ceili dance and appears in schools as a dance suitable for Key Stage 1. It is this simplicity that leads Carswell (2004) to believe that the dance is a realistic social dance. Ironically, it is probably this simplicity and the subsequent popularity that makes the story of this dance so complex.

## **1.2 Flitter Daunse**

The collection of this dance is at first complex in nature. Although related to traditions associated with Easter, the collection of this dance was a slow process over a number of years and is entangled with recollections of other games and dances.

The only strong dating evidence we have for the collection of this dance is in Douglas' paper of 1937 in which it is stated that this dance is incomplete. This paper associates the dance with Good Friday and a feast of limpets eaten on the shore. According to Douglas' source the remains of the limpets, cake and milk were thrown into the sea with a prayer or charm. A chain dance was then performed in the shape of an S to stamp out the embers of the fire. However, the dance could not be completed from this description. Later, in 1957, Douglas states that the dance has been completed thanks to the help of Mrs Radcliffe in Maughold who was able to demonstrate the steps. In this paper the dance is described as a ritual dance, although Douglas states that very little survives. However, rather fancifully, Douglas also posits that the dance links ancient Celtic ritual with modern custom – a supposition that has little to no evidence to back it up. This idea is also reiterated in another paper by Douglas 'Song and Dance in the Pattern of Old Manx Life' ( MNHL 09545 Box 1) in which she again states that Flitter Daunse goes back to pre-Christian spring festivities and constitutes part of a pagan ritual.

A number of informants are referred to in relation to this dance. In a notebook titled *Folklore Notebook: Dances* full of notes on collected dances in Douglas' hand (MNHL 09545 Box 9) the first reference comes from Mrs Callow of Cardle Veg. Mrs Callow's recollections come from first hand experiences as a girl and it is from her that Douglas gets most of her information on the ritual held on the beach on Good Friday. Mrs Callow remembers a dance, but could give no other details than that it was danced in an S shape by couples. The 2<sup>nd</sup> reference in this notebook comes from Mrs Teare of Ballaugh. She says that the dance was an extension of the game 'Pancakes and Flitters' and was danced around 40 years ago. Douglas notes that the rhyme and dance are still well known by children and notes down the rhyme. Now there has evidently been some confusion cause here by the word 'Flitter'. The rhyme given to Douglas by Mrs Teare is the second half of the children's nursery rhyme 'Oranges and Lemons'. Once the bells have been named in the rhyme, the older version

goes on to name the professions found in London. In one line 'Pancakes and Fritters' are mentioned in relation to street side food sellers. This is backed up by a scrap of paper found within Douglas' notes (MNHL 09545 Box 7) in a folder marked 'dances'. Under the title 'Pancakes and Flitters' is the description of a dance or game in which two children make an arch and the other children run under it in single file chanting:

Pancakes and Flitters is the way of cantailers  
I owe you two shillings, I'll pay you tomorrow;  
Cur skillen, cur pingyn, cur argid son Caisht  
As cha ver oo dou bee oo gheddyn dty vaaish.  
(Give a shilling, give pennies, give money for Easter,  
And if you don't give it to me you will die.)

The rhyme is striking similar in intention to Oranges and Lemons, and a similar game is played by children today. This game is evidently not related in any way to Flitter daunse, but has been included in notes and recollections due to a confusion between the words 'Flitter' and 'Fritter'. It does, however, go some way to illustrating that Douglas noted down all recollections relayed to her by her informants, even if they were tenuous or unrelated.

The final informant noted in Douglas' *Folklore Notebook* is an Ada Skillicorn who remembers the dance being performed on Dhoon head in approx 1900. Skillicorn took part in the dance herself and she was able to show Douglas the steps and movements. Douglas feels that it is a processional dance, although Skillicorn appears to be emphatic that the dance be danced in an S shape, which would tally with the first recollections of Mrs Callow. The dance as noted here is very similar to that which is danced today. However, during the simple sidings the 1<sup>st</sup> couples dance up and down the middle of the line while only the 2<sup>nd</sup> couples side, a variant that has not survived today.

It would seem likely then that these notes were collected before and after 1937, although not before 1900 and not after 1957. The identity of Mrs Radcliffe remains a mystery though, as the final complete dance came from Skillicorn. This may be a simple case of mis-remembered information on Douglas' part. Or there is the possibility that the dance as danced today came from Radcliffe, with the simple siding steps being carried out by all couples. On a scrap of paper in Douglas' hand can be seen a set of notes for the dance as performed today (MNHL 09545 Box 7: Dances Folder). There it is described as a slow dance for as many as will.

The dance was not published until 1983 in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* in which Douglas states that the dance has a slightly unclear history, but it is related to a feast held on the beach and may have been to extinguish the embers at the end of the 'bally-hoo' on Good Friday after a tea of flitters or jacks. Again, due to its simple form Carswell (2004) feels that this dance is a realistic social dance.

### **1.3 Hunt the Wren**

'Hunt the Wren' is a dance given great credence by its association with a long-standing custom, both on the Isle of Man and elsewhere. The tradition of hunting the wren can be found in Ireland and areas of Scotland, although the Irish tradition has only the last verse of the song remaining and no dance or tune associated with it.

The reasons for hunting the wren are many and the story alters depending on where and when you enquire. However, in all places the wren is hunted but one day a year, all other days it being held sacred, this day usually being St Stephen's day, now more commonly known as Boxing Day. The wren is usually hunted and then killed, its feathers sold for luck and its body buried as part of some ceremony.

The customs associated with the wren are so many they cannot be gone into here, and so only the dance will be investigated. The first noted reference to the dance is found in Waldron's writing of 1744. Later Train (1845) describes the custom as ending with a circular dance to music. In Gill's *Manx Scrapbook* (1929), however, there is no mention of the dance, although he states that the song was collected in 1843 and that it was imported along with mumming, the battle of summer and winter, etc. In the *Journal of the Folk Song Society* (1924) Gilchrist categorises the tune as connected with customs, and not as a dance tune. The words can be found in Moore's *Manx Ballads* (1896) and he states that the custom is still observed at the time. However, the tunes given by Gilchrist both originate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one from *Mona Melodies* (1820) the other is given as originating from the Clague Collection collected from Annie Crellin of Orrisdale.

The dance as it is now known is first recorded in 1937 as a complete dance in Douglas' 'Notation and Revival of Manx Dances' (1937). This description shows the dance and custom as having survived, although pagan, because the church saw the custom as akin to Carol singing. It is described as a dance game for four couples, an odd woman and a bush bearer, although was originally danced by boys only, with half of them being dressed as women. The object of the game was for the spare woman to catch herself a partner leaving another woman spare. At the end of the dance the spare woman left had to dance with the bush. The notes for the completed dance appear in Douglas' *Folklore Notebook: Dances* (MNHL 09545 Box 9) as being from informant J. Kelly of Baldrine. It was he who told her about the Wren Boys and that it was now danced by men and women, often without a spare woman or bush, but better with both. The dance as noted begins as it is danced today in a circle, and with the men and women moving alternatively inward and outward to honour the bush before spinning, however, in the collected version the men the move around the circle to a new partner before the dance starts again.

Over the next twenty years the dance was referred to in a number of papers and articles by Douglas and as such does not change in nature. In most descriptions it is a progressive ring dance, formerly ritual but now a children's game, the bush having disappeared and the spare girl just intent on finding a man to dance with.

In 1953 the dance was published in *Seven Manx Folk Dances: Set II* by Stainer & Bell with notation by Douglas. The tune is that collected by Clague, and the dance is very similar to the original notes, but with more detail and the progressive nature preserved. The story remains the same, with the slight addition of the spare woman originally being called the 'ben-treoghe yn drean' or 'widow of the wren'. In a description of dances as danced by the MFDS the dance is also the same with the progressive element (MNHL 09545 Box 30). The dance was later published in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* with the same story associated and attributed to the collection of Douglas. The progressive nature of the dance is noted in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* although the dance is not now performed in that way. In most cases the dance is performed with the same partner throughout and a lengthy spin to finish. It also now appears on the Key Stage 1 dance curriculum for schools. Carswell classifies this dance as another realistic social dance (2004).

Mona Douglas also documents a dance very similar in nature to this dance in a letter to Esther Kelly for a concert in Patrick School (MNHL 09545 Box 19). This dance is also a singing game and includes a circle of boys and a circle of girls. This time, however, the extra child is a boy and he has to dance with a goose. Although the figures are quite different, the similarities in intent are striking. This dance is then noted in a separate place in Douglas' notes with the title 'Moghrey Mie as Maynrys'. See full notes on this dance for further details.

#### **1.4 Yn Mheillea**

Perversely, this dance has the some of the earliest references and yet is one of the most recently completed of the Manx traditional dances.

According to Quayle in his *General View of the Agriculture of the Isle of Man*, 1812, the Manx peasants were much attached to dancing. This could be seen on the evening of the cutting of the last sheaf of corn, when the farmer called in a fiddler or two. This celebration marked the last day the women labourers were present to work and involved much dancing and celebration, as well as the Queen of the 'mellow'. A circular dance was performed at this celebration where the last sheaf was passed between the women. However, according to Hall Caine in 1894 in his recollections of childhood, at a Melliah [sic] that he attended there was no dancing as the host was a local preacher.

The first record of the dance as it is danced today comes in Douglas' 1937 paper in which she states that the dance is still incomplete, although the dances appears to be generally

known. This would appear to have been taken from her handwritten notes in her *Folklore Notebook: Dance* (MNHL 09545 Box 9) in which there is a reference to a circular harvest dance. Informants for this dance are 'Granny' and Charles Watterson of Castletown. However, the description is loose – a circle around the Queen of the Mheillea and the Babban (baby fashioned out of corn), followed by winding in and out in a chain, raising their hands above their heads and shouting 'hogh!' at intervals. Quite correctly, Douglas asserts that this is not enough information for reconstruction.

However, a full version appears to have been collected as a singing game from Children in Patrick, according to notation to the dance in Stowell's papers. Here the dance is similar to that danced today but lacks the final Manx Waltz movement, and is given in handwritten notation and attributed to Douglas. In 1943 the dance was performed with a Mheillea queen and Babban at St. John's school, according to correspondence found in Douglas' papers (MNHL 09545 Box 19). In the *Journal of the Manx Museum*, no.64, 1945 the dance is declared to be reconstructed and the tune noted from J Kelly of Baldrine, an apparent mine of dance information. A number of papers appear with typed notes to the dance, although frustratingly without dates. The dance differs each time, sometimes with the men 'balancing' in the chorus, other times performing a 'toe-knee' movement, and variously with or without the Manx Waltz movement. However, the dance was obviously popular enough to warrant a mention from Stenning (1950).

Peculiarly, Stowell's papers give a single mention to the Laare Vane being associated with the dance. In one of his many lectures, handwritten and stored with his papers, Stowell asserts that the Laare Vane put his head in the lap of the Mheillea Queen and went on to tell the future. There appears to be no evidence to back up this assertion, and many references to the Laare Vane being associated with New Year that would suggest this information is erroneous (see notes on Mylecharane's March).

The tune to the dance then appears on *Daunsey's Theayagh Vannin* LP (1973) with notes relating to the Mheillea Queen, the Babban ny Mheillea and procession. By 1979, in the Ian O'Leary Lecture at the first Yn Chruinnaght festival Mona Douglas once again explains the customs associated with the dance and states that the dance is already well known to most people. It also appears in the leaflet of dance instructions as produced by the MFDS as 'The Mhelliagh Dance (Adapted)' and does not have the Manx Waltz movement at the end. Finally the dance notes are published in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* with all three movements and a note on the related customs.

Once again, it is due to the simple nature of the dance that Carswell (2004) feels that the dance is a realistic social dance and that it appears on the Key Stage 1 Manx dance schools curriculum. However, it is worth noting that the version that appears on the accompanying

tapes includes only two verses, not three, possibly reflecting the occasionally omitted Manx Waltz movement. This would seem logical as the tapes are produced by the MFDS who previously published a version of the dance without the final movement.

### **1.5 Peter O'Tavy**

Peter O'Tavy is a dance primarily associated with weddings, in which the bride, groom, best man and bridesmaid test their sobriety after the wedding breakfast. However, as a traditional dance with associated folklore there is very little information available with regard to its collection. The earliest mention of the dance is in correspondence between Arnold Foster and Mona Douglas in 1935 (MNHL 09545 Box 21) pertaining to the upcoming publication of dances by Stainer & Bell, 'There are two tunes which I want – The Fairy Reel and Hunt the Wren and I hear from Edith Jones that there is another new one which she has not got called Peter O'Tavy'.

The dance has evidently been collected and deciphered during the early 1930s, as notes are already in existence by 1935 and a full sequence of photographs of Stowell's dance team at Albert Road performing the dance can be found in the Manx Museum library.



By kind permission of Manx National Heritage.

#### **A1.5.1 Peter O'Tavy. The honour by the Albert Road Dance Team c. 1935 (MNHL PG4962/1).**

As Stowell moved from Albert Road School, Ramsey to Castletown in 1937 the dance must have been complete by this time. This is backed up by Douglas' 1937 paper which states that the dance is complete and that oral tradition says that it is a relic of the Spanish Armada. The early restoration of this dance is further evidenced by Stowell in an extra mural lecture he

gave, in which he states that with the Albert Road team they first unravelled the Dirk Dance, then Car ny Ferrishyn, Eunysagh Vona, Peter O'Tavy and Car Juan Nan. This sequence of events would imply, based on information on the Albert Road Dance team (see Chapter 3), that the dance was already complete in 1929/1930. Further, Joe Woods states that an impromptu performance of the dance took place at the 1937 Celtic Congress (Bazin: 1998).

The most detailed information on the dance's origins comes from Stowell in his personal papers held in the Manx Museum. On a sheet of typed notes from 1950 Stowell maintains that this is the most beautiful of the Manx dances. He also states that he has entered it into the Guild many times since 1926 and it has always won. He also points out that the tune and words can be found in JFSS (1924) in which Gilchrist suggests that the name derives from 'Petronella,' an old country dance. He then goes on to state quite clearly that it used be sung at the tavern on Colby Bridge by the customers who, standing on one leg would move the other to the right and left without putting it on the ground, a tricky movement when one had drunk too much 'jough'. The date 1926 seems unlikely though as, if he did work the dance out with the Albert Road Team and Mona Douglas, they did not come together until 1928/9. There is, however, some possible information here as to the origin of the dance as collected but only in relation to the first step of the dance, not the ensuing figures. Stowell also refers to the dance as 'Car ny Phoosee' or 'the wedding reel'.

In one of Douglas' notebooks, however, she states quite clearly that this is a separate dance to Car y Phoosee; a lively long ways dance in which the whole company takes part. Douglas is also very realistic in these notes as to the ultimate origins of Peter O'Tavy. While she recognises that there is a tradition of Spanish influence on the Isle of Man with place names such as Spanish Head, there is no record of a Spanish ship ever being ship wrecked on the Isle of Man's shores, she notes that it is possible that some Armada survivors did settle on the Isle of Man at a later date. This ties in with what she sees as the grace and dignity of the dance, similar to some ceremonial Spanish dances.

Subsequently the dance was published as having been collected by Douglas in *Seven Manx Folk Dances: Set II* 1953 and it is in this form that it is danced today. The tune appears then on the LP *Daunsey'n Theayagh Vannin* (1973) as produced by the MFDS and finally the whole dance in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* in 1983.

### **1.6 Chyndaa yn Bwoailley**

Chyndaa yn Bwoailley is a distinctive courting dance. Performed by one man and one woman the dance is easily recognisable by its re-enactment of an argument and subsequent reconciliation of two lovers, most evidently symbolised by the woman slapping the man across the face and later hugging and kissing him.

It is also the first dance to be published. In 1926, after an erroneous assertion by Gilchrist in JFSS in 1924 that the tune Chyndaa yn Bwoailley related to the Frog dance, the letter sent to Gilchrist by Douglas was published in the appendix of the final edition of the series (1928) and includes notes to the chorus of the dance, in which the lady slaps the man hard across the face.

Within Douglas' *Folklore Notebook: Dances* (MNHL 09545 Box 9) a full description of the dance is given as danced today. The description is accompanied by a number of notes relating to the dance and its tune. In the first instance Douglas feels that Johnny Matey, whom she saw play the tune to dance at a Ballaugh Mheillea 20 years ago, probably learnt the tune from Gill placing the time of collection/ observation between 1896 and 1917; twenty years before 1937, the latest date likely for the first entries in the notebook. The second note states that this is the only traditional Manx dance still in recent usage, apart from a few jigs not commonly known. Douglas feels that it may have escaped the ban on dancing by Methodism due to its game like nature, and states that the dance was very raucous, danced by many couples at the same time, and often unrecognisable due to its energetic nature. In some cases the aim would appear to be to swing the woman off her feet in the arming movement. Douglas' notes are very explicit as to the origin of the dance and tune and where she collected them:

When I was small it used to be danced as one of the games in the ... after the Ballaragh Mheillea and the St. John's day tea party, but a good many years ago both it and other games were dropped and they had a sort of a concert instead and now I doubt if any of the young people or children could do it. Granny used to dance it as a girl and said it was always done then at weddings etc. and it was she who first taught it to me, but she was far more careful about steps and figures than the Ballaragh ones were, for very often there it became just a romp around and you hardly knew where you were in the dance. They sometimes had Johnny Matey up with his pipe to play for them but often someone just sang the tune and those not dancing clapped their hands for the beat. Granny used to do it to Hunt the Wren and other tunes; at the Ballaragh they had a special tune which Johnny said was the right one. Later I found that this was the tune Gill has for the Frog Dance, and I expect it was also used for that, but as its title is the name of this dance I should think this is the one it really belongs to. Dr. Clague has a different tune with the same title and the seems to give the points in the kicks better, but it is incomplete.

(Douglas: Folklore Notebook: Dances MNHL 09545 Box 9)

However, within the same paragraph Douglas refers to another person, N.C., whose identity is as yet unknown, who, on seeing the dance, tells Douglas that the dance is incorrect:

When I showed this dance to N.C. at the time when I was thinking of reviving it in Laxey as part of a village play, she said it must be a corrupt version because it seemed so ragged and also because it was quite wrong to do any pointing or kicking in a country dance. The 3<sup>rd</sup> figure she thought wrong and mixed up, and said it probably ought to be the one known as 'siding' which she showed us how to do. She also said that the stamping out to be a much lighter and prettier movement known as 'setting' and we altered the dance accordingly. I think it is as well, however, in this

notebook to put down exactly as it was done traditionally; even if it is mixed up with jigs etc. it may be an interesting variant.

(Douglas: Folklore Notebook: Dances MNHL 09545 Box 9)

Thankfully, although Douglas is not best known for her scientific collecting, she thought to write down all that she had collected and not just the corrected version. Regardless of how tidied up the dance was, the overall structure and steps would appear to have been collected from observation at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In a later publication of dances composed by Stowell in 1981, Stowell states that this was one of the dances taught to the Albert Road School Team in preparation for the visit of the EFDS in 1929.

In correspondence from Arnold Foster in 1931, however, the authenticity of the tune is brought into question. Foster cannot use the tune as it has been added to by Gill in *Manx National Music* (1898) and it would be against copyright. However, Douglas has already stated that her informant learnt the tune from Gill (MNHL 09545 Box 21). The dance, with the tune, was finally published in *5 Manx Folk Dances: Set I* in 1936 by Stainer & Bell almost exactly as it is danced now.

Further dating evidence is then given in Douglas 1937. In this paper she states that the tune was noted from a Lonan Fiddler, John Faragher, whom we can only assume to be Johnny Matey who performed the tune for the Ballaragh Mheilleas, who must have learnt it from Manx National Music, which at that time had been around for fifteen years, putting the time of collection at 1913. Douglas, however, seems to want to hang on to the idea of oral tradition and communication and is careful to state that the musician could not have learnt it from the music, but must have learnt it by ear from someone else. She also states that it is sometimes performed to the tune Hunt the Wren and that the Gaelic title was given by Gill, it usually being referred to only as 'the Courting Dance' and that the true air must have been lost as the original of the tune now used fits the Frog Dance much better, also implying that this dance is very familiar to Douglas.

In subsequent papers the dance is described as 'our courting dance' implying that it is unique to the Isle of Man and the only courting dance (MNHL 09545 Box 5, Rushen Internment Camp Demonstration: 1940) and later as a country dance, although it is not a set dance, and one of the three most characteristic Manx dances (MNHL 09545 Box 5, Misc. MSS) and finally, in a paper on *Ceremonial Folk Song and Mumming on the Isle of Man* almost identical to the usual type of English country dance, except for the slapping bit. Evidently with more experience Douglas realised that it was not quite as unique as she originally thought.

The dance then appears in many collections relating to Manx dance. In a small collection printed by the MFDS (MNHL 09545 Box 30) the dance is described as it is known today with the assertion that the arms should be held out to the side at shoulder height, the first time this instruction appears. The tune also appears in the LP *Daunsey'n Theayagh Vannin* (1973) and is described as a courting dance for two. The courtship ritual is described as most characteristic, although there is no mention of the slap. The dance finally appears in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* in 1983 with no notes other than that Douglas was responsible for its collection.

It would seem likely that this dance was collected in its entirety and then additions, changes and corrections made to it along the way by other performers, dancers and teachers allowing for the small amount of evolution that has taken place over time. However, if Douglas' notes are correct, the dance was collected in approximately 1913 and is still danced in the same way today. At the time of re-emergence of the dance in the 1930s the dance was in danger of being forgotten. It is worth noting that, in some dance groups at least, the raucous nature of the dance and the attempt to swing the lady off her feet have naturally crept back in!

### **1.7 Eunysagh Vona**



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#### **A1.7.1 The opening figure performed by the Albert Road Dance Team c.1935.**

**Note the extended arms (MNHL PG4959/2).**

One of the dances performed at the EFDS Easter Vacation School in 1929, this is one of the first dances to be noted in full. In her *Folklore Notebook: Dances* (MNHL 09545 Box 9) the dance is complete and the informant named as J Caine of Jurby. It is described as an 8-hand reel and states that hands should be joined at shoulder level, as in *Car Ny Ferrishyn*,

indicating that these were contemporary dances in their collection. The dance notation is exactly as it is danced today. A second notebook (MNHL 09545 Box 5), again frustratingly un-dated, describes the dance as popular all over the island and alternatively called 'The Peel Fishermen's Game'. Douglas then goes on to explain that, because of Methodism, dancing was frowned upon and so the dances were called games. These games were often performed on the road after chapel tea parties and the like, often to singing, the mouth organ, or to no music at all. Although the notes are a little ambiguous here it would appear that the dance was collected at one of these events and was not accompanied by music.



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#### **A1.7.2 The ladies honour by Albert Road Dance Team c. 1935 (MNHL PG4959/9)**

A series of photographs is also extant showing each movement of the dance as performed by the Albert Road dance team. However, this sequence begins with an honour, with the ladies curtsying and the men bowing towards them. This honour does not appear in any notes and is evidently, from correspondence between Billy Cain and Mona Douglas of the late 1940's (MNHL 09545 Box 21), an invention of English dancer Stowell. It seems that this dance was not popular with the dancers originally as it required boys and girls to hold hands, something they did not relish at such a young age and a problem any modern dance teacher will be well acquainted with! (Stowell in Bazin: 1998)

The notes and music to the dance were published in *Five Manx Folk Dances: Set I* 1936 with accompaniment arranged by Arnold Foster. No further information is given on the dance other than that the collector was Mona Douglas and the dance is described as an 8-hand reel. Unsurprisingly, the dance is also described as complete in Douglas' paper of 1937 on the notation and revival of Manx dances.

The dance is often described as being characteristically Manx and the flying arches figure is, according to Douglas in the JMM No 64. 1945, found nowhere else in the world. Even Stenning (1950) who is a little dubious as to the authenticity of Manx dances notes the unique flying arches figure. Stowell is evidently a fan of the dance and sums his feeling up in his personal notes:

This is a dance for eight, four men and four women, and again somewhat like an English country dance, except for certain peculiarities which give it a charm and beauty, typically Manx. It is evidently one which was danced more for show than for pleasure, as it is tiring if done more than once, and ends with a decidedly spectacular finish and 'hogh'.

I consider this dance the best Manx dance for competition, as more finish can be put into it than into any other, owing to its requiring grace, smoothness and refinement, yet a large degree of 'snap'. Beginners will find it tiring, but they soon find that this is due to unnecessary exertion being put into the 'Body'.

(Stowell: MNHL 09683)

However, Stowell's feelings for the dance did not deter him from adding his own touches to it. As well as the additional honour seen earlier, a photograph of the dance from 1954 (PG4967/3 File Dancing Fol:1) shows the final figure of a right hand star has been quite altered by Stowell. Instead of the ladies being beside their partners in a Manx Waltz hold with outside hands free and arms raised, the ladies are dancing alone in the four corners of a square while the men execute a right hand star in the centre, quite different from the original notes. Also, in 1964 it can be seen from correspondence between Douglas and Stowell (MNHL 09545 Box 21) that Stowell has asked Douglas to write a *purt-y-beayll*, the Manx form of mouth music or *lilting* to accompany the dance. The use of a *purt-y-beayll* seems to be entirely Stowell's creation, in keeping with the Dirk Dance, the only dance to have a *purt-y-beayll* collected in association with it. Douglas did promise to write one, but the dance continues to be performed to the relevant tune.

The same tune later appears on the LP *Daunsey'n Theayagh Vannin* (1973) and the dance described as the most popular Manx eight-hand reel (there are only two!) with very characteristic steps and movements and ending with a 'hogh!'. The dance was published again in 1983 in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* although beyond telling us that the dance was collected by Douglas there is no further information given on the origins of the dance.

### **1.8 Illiam y Thaelhear**

There is very little information given on this couples dance. The dance does not appear in any of Douglas' notebooks. A set of typed notes does appear in Douglas' personal papers (MNHL 09545 Box 4) but with no dating evidence, however, due to its similarities to other typed notes of more recent dances, these would appear to be relatively late. The notes are

the same as that danced today. In the same box a purt-y-beayll does appear to the dance, although it is called 'Thobm-y-Thallear' in this instance:

'Scoar ta'n obbyr y thallear  
Giarrey, whoal, as jeant keear-lheah  
Shickyr – hogh' berchagh, boght –  
Coamrey Cooie 'shas dooinney dagh'

Where these words come from is unknown. Notes to the dance, both handwritten and typed appear in Stowell's papers as well, but once again un-dated.

The tune to the dance appears on the LP *Daunseyn Theayagh Vannin* (1973) again called 'Thobm y Thallear (Tom the Tailor)' but the description would indicate that this refers to the dance called Illiam y Thaelhear today. It appears under this title in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* in 1983 with no additional information other than that it was collected by Douglas.

### **1.9 Jem as Nancy**

There is very little information given on this dance and it is rarely discussed or performed. However, according to Douglas' *Folklore Notebook: Dances* the dance was collected from P Kelly of Baldrine. The dance was reportedly 'danced in the pubs when the fleet came home and also at Mheilleas and similar gatherings.' The notes to the dance are then given very much as danced today, with a couple of exceptions. Firstly there is a whole figure that Douglas later notes is, according to Kelly, not part of this dance. The second is a note added at a later date that Mrs Callow says that the last figure Kelly has given Douglas is wrong, and so she has given Douglas the proper ending, by demonstrating it with children. It is this ending that is used today. This is evidence that Douglas did not just write down what she was told, but then cross referenced information with other informants and added or altered the collected notes when more information was gained.

This process had evidently finished for the dance by 1937 as this is another of the dances described as complete in Douglas' paper of the same year on the revival and notation of Manx dances. In this paper the dance is called *Jemmy as Nancy* or *Jimmy and Nancy* and it is pointed out that the dance uses an English set and turn single as opposed to a balance and spin seen in other Manx dances. Typed notes without dates appear in Douglas' and Stowell's papers and the tune is on the LP *Daunseyn Theayagh Vannin* (1973). The final dance is published in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* in 1983 and noted as collected by Mona Douglas.

### **1.10 Fathaby Jig**

The history of this dance is a little more complex as it appears to have more than one name. In some sources the dance is also called 'Cur Shaghey yn Geurey' which is now the name of an entirely different couples dance. There is no evidence to explain this discrepancy.

The dance does not appear in the *Folklore Notebook: Dances* book in Douglas' papers, but a similar page of notes does exist but gives no hint as to the origin of the dance. (MNHL 09545 Box 9). In a similar notebook (MNHL 09545 Box 5) notes can be found with some history of the dance. This states that the dance is usually associated with the north of the island, particularly Bride where it was a regular feature of the Mheillea, Christmas and New Year celebrations. The dance is also reported to be mentioned by T.E. Brown in his letters, although verification of this reference is yet to be found. However, in later typed, un-dated notes the informants for the dance are given as J Mylchreest, J Kelly and Mrs Bridson. There is no further information as to who these people were or when they were consulted, although in-depth work on the informants of the Manx collectors has recently been carried out by Stephen Miller (research in process).

The first concrete evidence of the dance is in the paper by Douglas of 1937 on the notation and revival of Manx dances and it is described as being complete. In this paper it is described as an 8-hand jig, similar to an 8-hand reel, but in jig time and with the lead round at the beginning and end as opposed to body and figure; not actually that similar to a standard 8-hand reel other than being for 8 people. In 1945 in JMM No. 64 Douglas posits that the distinctive lift in the lead round at the beginning and end of the dance is possibly Scandinavian in origin. The dance was then published in 1953 in *Seven Manx Folk Dances: Set II* with no additional information other than citing Douglas as the collector.

The tune then appears on the LP *Daunsey'n Theayagh Vannin* (1973) where the dance is described as a 'lively 8-hand jig with characteristic steps and an unusual lift of the women round their partners in the promenade'. The dance was republished in 1980 in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* with no additional information other than, once again, citing Douglas as the collector.

It is worth noting that, although the dance was previously compared to a standard 8 hand reel, now more commonly referred to as a set dance in Ireland, Carswell (2004) argues that Douglas did not agree with this assertion.

### **1.11 Car Ny Ferrishyn**

This dance poses many difficulties as a Manx traditional dance as it is also most commonly known as a 6-hand reel in Ireland. The Irish dance was collected in 1903 by *An Comisiun* collectors O'Keefe and O'Brien. It was then published in a collection of dances accredited by *An Comisiun* as being authentically traditional Irish, ostensibly more than 200 years old by 1903. However, the tune was composed by Gow in Scotland in 1796, only 107 years before the dance was collected. The Irish have a complex folklore accompanying the dance and the tune associating with fairy music or 'ceol si' thus claiming the dance and tune for their own in the minds of Irish musicians and dancers. Its appearance on the Isle of Man is assumed by many to be an import from Ireland. However, as the received origin of the dance and tune in

Ireland is at best dubious, this is not a theory to be assumed true. As this dissertation is not concerned with the authenticity of the dances, merely with piecing together the history of the formation of a Manx traditional dance canon, the dance will not be compared with the Irish version (Curtis).

The tune appears as associated with dancing in Gilchrist's edition of the Clague collection in JFSS in 1924 in which she states that most of the good lively dance tunes are Irish and Scottish in origin and mentions Gow's fairy dance. Notes to the dance appear in Douglas' *Folklore Notebook: Dances* (MNHL 09545 Box 9) with very detailed notes and diagrams of the dance. The dance was described to Douglas by her grandmother and recognised by many older people, although she states that it is no longer commonly known. Douglas did not ever witness a full demonstration, but the figures were all described and the steps were taught to her and Douglas is aware that the tune is similar to 'Snieu, wheeyl, Snieu' and had been previously published in Gill's *Manx National Music* (1898) under the title 'Daunsin ny Ferrishyn'. Stowell mentions the dance as being one of the first worked out by the Albert Road dance team in 1928/29 (Stowell in Bazin: 1998) and in 1934 in correspondence to Douglas is concerned that the dance is not really a country dance and so should not be entered in the Guild competitions, although he relents when he decides that it is a Manx country dance and definitely not classical so it will probably be acceptable (MNHL 09545 Box unknown).



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**A1.11.1 Car ny Ferrishyn performed by the Albert Road Dance Team c. 1935**  
(MNHL PG4964/1)

In her 1937 paper Douglas describes this dance as complete but is aware that she may suffer criticism for the use of the air. She does point out, however, that she collected it from a female singer and that it was very popular throughout the island. In 1933 she had heard it

played in Ireland and seen a similar dance performed to it, a minor set of the Donegal dance, also a progressive dance for 2 men and 4 women, although the steps and figures were quite different. She also states that she feels that the dance, being so similar to an Irish dance, better demonstrates the Manx style as it is these differences that reveal the Manx style. However, to make matters more confusing, there are two versions on the Isle of Man, one in the North and one in the South. The dance was evidently deemed different enough by the MFDS and EFDSS as the dance was published in 1953 in *Seven Manx Folk Dances: Set II*. In this publication it is described as 6-hand reel collected by Douglas, with no mention of its Irish counterpart.

In 1954 however, in correspondence between Douglas and the MFDS secretary, Griffiths (MNHL 09545 Box 21) Douglas asks that the dance called Car ny Ferrishyn that Stowell uses be given a different name and a different tune and it be treated as a composed dance, as that is what it is. This does cause some confusion. It is unknown if this is the second version mentioned in 1937 which Stowell has possibly collected, or if this is a third dance entirely composed by Stowell to the same tune and given the same name, a situation Stowell found himself in more than once.

However, in 1973 the LP *Daunsey'n Theayagh Vannin* included the tune and does mention the connection with the Irish/Scottish tune and another 6-hand reel. The dance notes were republished in 1983 in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* with no explanatory notes. It seems likely, then, that we shall never know how many versions there were of this dance or their ultimate origin. In subsequent study a detailed analysis of the steps and figures to ascertain whether more than one version is published or collected may answer some of these questions, but dance does show that the Manx tradition was part of a pan-western European tradition and was not entirely insular and cut off, and that the Isle of Man did generate its own style of dance, at least, and that it was akin to a regional style in larger countries.

### **1.12 Car Juan Nan**

The notes of this dance appear in Douglas' *Folklore Notebook: Dances* (MNHL 09545 Box 9). The notes are very detailed and represent the same dance as is danced today. It is worth noting that the final figure is compared to the dance *Guilley Hesheree* implying that this dance was also collected at a similar time. Stowell then verified the early completion of this dance as he states that this was one of the first learnt by the Albert Road dance team in 1928/9 (Bazin: 1998). A series of photographs of this team performing the dance in the grounds of Albert Road School are still extant in the Manx Museum library:



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**A1.12.1 The 'C' formation performed by Albert Road Dance Team c. 1935.**  
(MNHL PG4960/2)

Further information, however, can be found in a miscellaneous fragment of handwritten notes found in Douglas' papers (MNHL 09545 Box 1). The dance is said to be performed to a typical fiddle tune and is named after Juan Nan who ran an illicit still in the East of the Island and had connections with 'the trade' or smuggling. He was also said to be the best fiddler, dancer and singer on the Isle of Man, his children all danced and his parties were reportedly famed throughout three parishes; he was said to use dancing and frivolity to distract any over interested policemen. This dance was his favourite, hence the name. Douglas also notes the similarities with 'Morpeth Rent', an English country-dance, but while the tune is similar the dance is very different. Douglas also notes that the dance is very difficult, although follows that up by stating that all the Manx dances are. In this fragment and another (MNHL 09545 Box 4) Douglas also relates this dance with the song 'Smugglers Lullaby'. This link seems a little unusual, as the song is, as the name would imply, a lullaby and so not really fast enough to dance a vigorous reel. This link may relate to Juan Nan's alleged connections with the trade, but there is no evidence to support either theory, merely asserting that the two are related.

In 1937 the dance is described as complete in Douglas' paper on the revival and notation of Manx dances. In her later papers, Douglas expands on the collection of the dances. In one paper (1958) Douglas states that she collected the dance from John Matt who remembered Jimmy Juan Nan from the Clarum as a famous singer, dancer and fiddler. John Matt demonstrated and described the dance to her when she was only twelve years old. The dance was then published in *Seven Manx Folk Dances: Set II* in 1953 and the collection

attributed to Douglas from informants J.M. Mylchreest and J.P. Kelly. In 1954 the dance was used in a film made to accompany a paper given by Nikolai Giovanelli in Brazil at the Seventh International Folk Music Conference. It is worth noting that the accompanying recording made to illustrate the paper includes a rendition of Smuggler's Lullaby, it is unknown if this is relevant to Car Juan Nan or purely coincidental.

The tune is included on the LP *Daunsey'n Theayagh Vannin* (1973) and the dance described as a 'difficult and spectacular eight-hand reel with a lift of the women to finish.' The dance notes were then re-published in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* in 1983.

It is worth noting here that the C formation in the first figure appears to have been part of the dance since its collection. Each set of notes mentions a joining up of the circle later and the photograph above certainly places the dancers in a C formation. Although only of interest to dancers, this point is worth making as it has been said that this C formation was an invention of a modern dance group because they could not move fast enough to make up a circle from a straight line and was given as evidence to Douglas' tendency to an over 'creative' attitude to Manx dances, as previously discussed in Chapter 6 (anecdotal evidence).

### **1.13 Cur Shaghey yn Geurey**

Although a name also given to Fathaby Jig there is no known evidence to explain the origins of this dance. Some typed notes appear in amongst Douglas' papers pertaining to Sleih gyn Thie and *Rinkaghyn Vannin* in which the dance has a Manx Waltz to finish but explains that a simple turn can be used for very young children. The dance appears in 1983 in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* as collected by Douglas from a Miss Davies. It is also described by Carswell (2004) as being a realistic social dance although no historic evidence of its provenance can be found.

### **1.14 Yn Guilley Hesheree**

As could be seen in the notes to Car Juan Nan, the dance 'Yn Guilley Hesheree' or 'the ploughboy' was one of the original dances collected by Mona Douglas. Notes to the dance appear in Douglas' *Folklore Notebook: Dances* as having been collected from P Kelly of Baldrine from a description and a fast demonstration. The notes represent the dance as it is performed today. Photographs of the dance performed at Albert Road by the school's dance team are extant in the Manx National Library and the completed dance was published in 1936 in *Five Manx Folk Dances: Set I* and attributed to Douglas' collection. Again it is categorised as a completed dance in Douglas' 1937 paper on the revival and notation of Manx dances and is used as an example of the Manx Waltz. There is scant information on the dance otherwise until the tune appears on the *Daunsey'n Theayagh Vannin* LP (1973) and the dance described as 'showing characteristic Manx steps and movements.' It was later republished in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* (1983) with no additional notes other than attributing its

collection to Douglas. This is another of what Carswell describes as a realistic social dance (Carswell: 2004).

### **1.15 Car y Phoosee**

The earliest datable reference to this dance is its publication in 1953 in *Seven Manx Folk Dances: Set II*. The dance does not appear in any of Douglas' notebooks except in an undatable notebook in which there is a fleeting reference to its not being the same as Peter O'Tavy, but a 'lively longways in which the whole company joined'. Stowell refers to Peter O'Tavy as Car ny Phoosee in the early 1930s sequence of photographs of the former dance and it is possible that Douglas wishes to distinguish between the two because of this. It would not seem unreasonable then that the dance was known of in the 1930s, although there is no concrete evidence for this.

There is no mention of when or where the dance was collected or whether it has been pieced together from fragments. The tune appears on the LP *Daunseyn Theayagh Vannin* (1973) and a distinction made between Car y Phoosee and Peter O'Tavy, and the notes were re-published in 1983 in *Rinkaghyn Vannin*.

### **1.16 Car ny Rankee**

Once again, this dance has no historical evidence associated with it to confirm its provenance. Its first concrete datable reference is on the early 1970s recording *Daunseyn Theayagh Vannin* and the only information given is that it is a six hand reel for two men and four women that can be danced either progressively or as a discrete set. There are other references to it, one a handwritten set of notes in Stowell's papers titled 'Car ny Rankee (as taught by PLS [Philip Leighton Stowell])' and signed PLS at the end, and a fragment of paper in Douglas' papers with four tunes written on it, evidently as a set list (MNHL 09545 Box 29):

Car Ny Rankee: 6 hand reel  
Hie Mee Stiagh: 6 hand ring dance  
Jemmy as Nancy: 4 hand reel  
Moghrey Mie as Maynrys!

There is little in this to give an exact date, although the appearance of Hie Mee Stiagh and Moghrey Mie as Maynrys would imply that this sheet was written relatively late in the formation of a Manx dance canon as can be seen in later notes on these two dances.

The final reference comes in 1983 in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* and states that the dance was collected by Douglas but additional information is not given.

### **1.17 Ben Rein y Voaldyn**

There are no references to this dance other than its publication in 1983 in *Rinkaghyn Vannin*, in which it states that it was collected by Douglas. The tune 'Moghrey Laa Boaldyn' is

included in Gilchrist's exposition of Clague's collection (JFSS, no 64, 1924) as a dance tune, but this is the only, very tenuous, reference to any historical source for the dance.

### **1.18 Moirrey ny Cainle**

Again there are few references to this dance before its publication in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* in 1983 and there is no mention of its collection or collector. In an undated essay in Douglas' notes 'Song and Dance in the Pattern of Old Life' (MNHL 09545 Box 1) it is described as being danced before entering the church to place the candles on the alter rail at Candlemas, a description also found in *Rinkaghyn Vannin*. It is noteworthy that amongst Douglas' papers involving the collation of dances for *Rinkaghyn Vannin* (MNHL 09545 Box 19) two typed versions of the notes to the dance can be found, both differing from one another distinctly.

### **1.19 Moghrey Mie as Maynrys**

There are no historical references to this dance, with the exception of a miscellaneous, undated scrap of paper as discussed earlier in the description of Car ny Rankee (MNHL 09545 Box 29). Frustratingly there are no early notes corresponding to this dance. Amongst Douglas' notes pertaining to the publication of *Rinkaghyn Vannin* typed notes to three entirely separate dances appear under the title Moghrey Mie as Maynrys. One is a linear dance with an opening similar to Eunysagh Vona, one is a couples dance now known as Purt Cubbley and a third is a longways progressive dance for groups of four as danced today. It is this version that is published in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* (1980) in which the collection of the dance is attributed to Douglas. A fourth version can be found in typed notes elsewhere in Douglas' papers (MNHL 09545 Box 7: Dances Folder) which does bear some similarities to the version danced today, but with a lead-in implying performance and movements currently unknown in any extant Manx dances. Further research on the origins of this dance will have to be carried out.

### **1.20 Purt Cubbley**

As previously discussed typed notes to this dance appear amongst Douglas' notes under the title Moghrey Mie as Maynrys. Its only datable reference is in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* where it is published as being collected by Douglas. However, in conversation with Sue Ling Jaques (nee Lee) she stated that she and dancer David Callister found the notes to the dance in Douglas' piano stool one day. Further research on the origins of this dance will need to be undertaken, although it would appear to be a relatively new addition to the canon.

### **1.21 Reeaghyn dy Vannin**

Probably the most famous of all Manx dances, the origin of the Dirk Dance is often questioned and debated. It is so distinctive in character that many believe it to be ancient, whilst sceptics see this as reason for it to be hoax.

Notes to the dance can be found in Douglas' *Folklore Notebook: Dances* which indicate that the dance was collected from J Kermode of Port Mooar and the tune from the singing of his wife Mrs Kermode. Douglas also states that she could not find a corresponding tune in the Clague or Gill collections (1896, 1898) and Douglas cites K [ermode] as asserting that the dance was what 'the old kings of Mann were using' and that he had learnt the dance from his father. Interestingly Douglas also notes that Kermode said that a number of men around the island would have known the dance but it had never been a popular dance. Douglas also states that she had information that the dance was ceremonial but could find no information on what sort of ceremony, season or custom the dance was used for and feels that it was likely that it was a dance performed for its own sake. Douglas also notes the sword used as being called a 'skynn' (c.f. the short dagger worn in men's Scottish national dress) and that it was small, short and light but looked very old, and that Kermode said it had been in his family for a long time. Then follows a complex description of the dance in prose, with many of the steps described as opposed to named, but the movements and steps are all described. The notes finish with personal note from Douglas in brackets: '(This is easily the most impressive Manx dance I have seen and ought to be made a feature of at the Cruinnaght)'. The Cruinnaght was a festival similar to the Eisteddfod of Wales held annually during the 1920s. It would seem unlikely that the notes refer to the modern incarnation of the festival as it did not begin again until the late 1970s.

Later notes from the collection of Stowell (1966) add more to this information (MNHL 09683). He states that the dance was recovered in 1925 by Douglas and describes the dance as a solo ritual dance, 'performed before the King of Mann as he sat on the hill of law surrounded by his Yoshee or chieftain warriors'. The dance was performed within the circle of stones known as the *creggyn casherick* or holy stones. He then goes on to cite a second informant, Bella Garrett, as having seen the dance, although the ritual was different to that given by Stowell. The dancer, being a young Celt or Norseman was dedicating his dirk to an unknown god, honouring this god with his skill and agility. In the final figure the dancer would let the dirk slip to reveal a cross that he would then hold in front of his face, honouring the god. However, in an interview with George Broderick in 1979, Douglas states that she saw Jackie Kermode perform the Dirk Dance in 1909 or 1910. This would mean that she was a young girl when the dance was collected, corroborating many of her other accounts. This would also tally with the supposed age and date of death of Kermode. In 'A Folk Dancer' a miscellaneous essay within Douglas' notes, Kermode's age is given as 81 at the time of collection. Miller (2004) then states that Kermode died in 1918. If Kermode were 81 in 1909 then he would have died age 89 in 1918, which is not outside the bounds of belief. It would, however, make it unlikely that Douglas collected the dance in 1925 as Stowell states, although he may mean that the notes to the dance were recovered in 1925, some 15 or 16 years after their collection.

The undated essay, 'The Folk Dancer' would appear to have a likely story for the way in which the dance was collected. According to this document Douglas was informed that there was a fisherman who could dance 'the real old Manx sword dance of the Kings of Mann was using to dance before now' and so went to find him. On finding his house Douglas reportedly asked for the dance and Mrs Kermode tried to put her off, pointing out that Mr Kermode was very old, past dancing but Douglas was not dissuaded and Mr Kermode agreed to perform for Douglas. As in other stories Kermode takes the sword from above the fireplace and dances the dance in a slow ceremonial nature while Mrs Kermode hummed the tune. After a description of the dance this essay agrees with Douglas' notebook as it states that Kermode went on to say that he had learnt the dance from his father and that it was the oldest Manx dance, but also that a man from Lerwick danced it to another tune and then links the dance with the Shetlands where it was well known. Douglas went on to explain to the Kermodes that she was collecting old dances to teach to people so they were not lost, although the Kermodes were a little dubious that this would work. After explaining that the Dance was only for men, Kermode then offered to teach Douglas the dance in sections, although she could not dance it all at once. Douglas then returned to the Kermode's a number of times where she was shown scraps of dances, a couple of complete dances, some lore and even witnessed a demonstration of Chyndaa yn Bwoailley. Douglas then says that she went away – presumably this alludes to the period in which Douglas went to work in Wales and London - and when she came back the Kermodes were dead and the house derelict.

Unfortunately, as all of the persons involved are now dead, it is unlikely that any evidence or proof will be forthcoming. It does seem likely, however, that the dance was collected in 1909 to 1910 by a young Douglas from Jackie Kermode and his wife and not performed by another until her notes were rediscovered in 1925.

The dance is mentioned in a paper published in the JFDS in 1928 as being not quite English or Scottish but closer to Scottish than anything else. It was first performed in 1929 by Billy Cain for the EFDS Easter Vacation school which marked the start of a period of fame for the dance. Douglas Kennedy, the chairman of the EFDS was so excited by the dance that he reportedly nearly fell from his chair and as soon as the dance was over and he sent a telegram to the society headquarters to alert them to the fact that he has discovered a new sword dance first thing the next morning. Stowell had taught the dance to all of the boy dancers at Albert Road School, six in all, but Cain was the best (Douglas: 1949). Cain was then invited to perform the dance in the Albert Hall as part of the All England Festival in January 1930. Cain travelled to London alone and performed the dance to an orchestral accompaniment arranged by Arnold Foster. The orchestra reportedly started the music too fast and Cain was forced to stop dancing and ask them to start again at the correct speed, causing much amusement among the audience. Subsequent years saw a return of Cain and the Albert Road Team to the All England Festival to perform the Dirk Dance and other newly

rediscovered Manx dances. In 1935 the Dirk Dance was performed in front of the King and Queen of England at the International Folk Dance Festival and again at the Edinburgh Festival by Arthur Watterson, and at the Irish International Festival by Stephen Newbold (MNHL 09545 Box 5).



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#### **A1.21.1 The final figure 'The Salute' c. 1935 (MNHL 9683)**

As soon as the dance had been performed in public, correspondence between Arnold Foster and Mona Douglas (1931) discusses the possibility of publishing the dance. Foster feels this should be done as soon as possible while the dance is still as popular as it is and will sell well and is vehement that Douglas not teach the dance or music until the publication is complete. It seems that it is at this time that some doubt is cast over the authenticity of the dance, in which joint conductor of the tune at the Albert Hall with Foster, Vaughan Williams, reportedly asked outright if the dance had been demonstrated and Foster felt it was best to be up front about any additions. Unfortunately Douglas' reply to this question is not extant within her papers and so her answer is not known. However, if her written notes are to be trusted, the dance was collected in its entirety from demonstration and it appears that as this practice was common amongst publishers of folk dances the authenticity of this dance was questioned as a matter of course and not due to any suspicions of tampering.

The sudden popularity of the dance is summed up in Douglas' lecture given in Liverpool in 1934 to accompany a demonstration of Manx dances. In this she says that the Dirk Dance has become famous throughout the folk dance world as Billy Cain had performed it at the All England Festival five years running. She even goes as far as saying that the instantaneous success of the dance has scarcely a parallel in the history of folk dancing. In 1936 the dance was finally, after much persuasion and wrangling between Foster and Douglas, published in *Five Manx Folk Dances: Set I* under the title 'Reeaghyn dy Vannin or Kings of Mann' with the subtitle 'Dirk Dance'. In Douglas' notes the dance is described as being performed by the Kings of Man by Kermode but there is no mention of the dirk. This can possibly be explained by a miscellaneous note in Douglas' papers (MNHL 09545 Box 5) in which Douglas writes that the Manx Sword Dance should possibly be called a Dirk dance as the sword used is short like a Scottish Dirk. The 'Dirk Dance' is evidently a description such as '8-hand reel' or 'couples dance' as opposed to a distinguishing title. As the only dance of this kind within the Manx repertoire it has become known as THE Dirk Dance.

In her 1937 paper Douglas describes the dance as complete. Douglas also mentions the link between the dance and the air found in the Hebrides, although there it is a lullaby. Douglas feels that the dance and air are Scandinavian, an opinion that appears to have been passed on to her by other folk dance specialists outside of the Isle of Man. Nonetheless, she decides that the dance must have been taken to the Hebrides by a Manxman and left behind, with only the tune surviving and its idiom altered. Douglas goes on to reiterate the story of its collection, whilst also slightly emphasising the hereditary nature of the dance; Kermode stated he learnt it from his father, this has now become a tradition of the Kermode family for it to be passed from father to a son with the suitable build of a dancer. Douglas also states that no other fishermen danced the dance. This statement is important as later it would appear to become misinterpreted to mean that no other men were *allowed* to perform the dance. Kermode says that other men danced it and Douglas' statement appears to mean that she did not find any other men who could do so, which is a distinctly different matter. She then goes on to point out the similarities between Kermode and Cain as dancers of the dance and cites a 14<sup>th</sup> century document that specifies that a sword be used and saluted as part of the Tynwald ceremony as evidence that the dance predates this document and that by this time only the salute remained. Douglas does not give any indication as to how she thinks the dance survived for six centuries if it was no longer used as part of the ritual.

The story of the dance continued to evolve and alter as time went on. As a popular dance it formed the nucleus of many of Douglas' published papers and, as with any story, the facts become skewed with additional telling. In 1940 at a demonstration of Manx dances at Rushen internment camp (MNHL 09545 Box 5) it is referred to as the most impressive of all the ritual dances and was, quite definitely, performed by ancient Kings before their coronation. In 1945 in JMM No 64, the Dirk Dance is described as being totally unique, although in some way

similar to Scottish dances, although Douglas again mentions a Scandinavian influence on the dance, possibly strengthening its association with the Norse Kings of Mann, implying the dance is very ancient indeed and giving it more credence as a traditional dance. In 1949 in a paper given for the Scottish Anthropological Society Douglas reiterates that she saw the Dirk Dance as a child and states that Cain is still the single modern interpreter with Jackie Kermode's blessing. This statement does cause much confusion, as Douglas states that Kermode saw Cain dance it without Cain's knowledge, an impossibility as Kermode was already dead by this stage. It is possible that this has been fabricated to get around the common misconception that only a Kermode could perform the dance. Again Douglas cites the salute as evidence that the dance was part of the Manx State Ritual. In the ensuing discussion, the notes of which are added in the publication of the paper, a Mr Shulldham Shaw asserts that the dance is similar to a Norse dance on Orkney, and is not Celtic. Stowell also asserts that the salute at the end is a salute to God, in keeping with his information from Bella Garrett. In 1950 Stenning refers to the dance as unique and the dirk as a symbol as much as a weapon. In 1954 Don Nikolai Giovanelli, a great friend of Douglas', travelled to Brazil to give a paper on Manx Dances as used in Education to the Seventh International Folk Music Conference. Only two dances were demonstrated, on film, one being 'Reeaghyn dy Vannin, Ritual Dirk Dance of the Kings of Mann' and performed by Stephen Newbold.

In 1957 in the *The Folklorist* Douglas states that the Dirk Dance was the only ritual Manx dance known outside of the Isle of Man, and as such was always treated with great reverence. In a second publication of 1957 for the Journal of the International Folk Music Council the story has grown and become quite romantic in relation to the collection and origin of the dance. Douglas does begin by stating that the name is very new, that the original name was lost, but then refers to it as the most distinctive Manx traditional ritual dance and that it is now commonly known. Douglas goes on to tell the story of its collection beginning with her childhood when she had often heard of the dance as something very mysterious and difficult and she implies that the dance was in some way sacred and the north of the island knew it as the 'Kirk Maughold Sword Dance of the Kings of Mann' and there was great expectation when she, Douglas, was taken to see Kermode perform it. She then goes on to mention the ceremony of the performance, that the weapon was hung in a place of honour, and that he drank a beaker full of whisky first, using his left hand while he held the sword in the right and then performed the dance. This is the first mention of any ceremony or a beaker of whisky. The paper goes on to state that in the popular mind there is rooted an idea of the state sword-bearing ritual, which seems a little evasive of Douglas in this instance. She then goes on to describe the sword as being 21" long, narrow, double edged with a silver hilt that curved away from the blade and had a raised boss in the centre, the sun on one side, the three legs of Mann on the other. This description does not match that given by Bella Garrett to Stowell. Douglas then elaborates again on the hereditary nature of the dance and states that only the Kermode family could dance it and it should be passed through the line.

As Kermode's son was disabled (and probably relatively elderly himself if Kermode was 81) and he did not want to see the tradition broken, Kermode was willing to pass the dance on to another boy. This was justified by the fact that the Kings of Mann had decided to change the tradition and pass it on to the Kermodes, so why not alter the tradition now? Kermode was adamant it must be taught to a dancer and not just any boy, however. The origin of the dance according to Kermode in this account is, as ever, ambiguous, and begins with it being danced by druids, then by the kings from the north, which can be assumed to mean Vikings. Douglas feels that it is likely that the dance was Celtic in origin and then passed onto the Norse, but no evidence is proposed for this. Ancient documents are again cited as evidence of the bearing of arms at the investiture ceremonies in Mann, but this time the document dates from 1445. It is, however, a common mistake to call the 1400s the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Kermode states that the dance was a salute to the sun and used the derivation of the name Kermode from Mac Mod, meaning 'son of the assembly' as further evidence to the ancient nature of the dance. The story becomes even more fanciful again with the origin of the tune being, this time, a fairy tune that only women can perform, preferably a close family relation of the dancer as it was taught by a woman of the sea to a king's mother. It is here she states that it is bad luck for women to learn the dance and so she learnt it in small sections returning to the house again and again, and also that it must never be performed to another tune.



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**A1.21.2 Roadly Archibald performing the Dirk Dance in 1959 (MNHL PG4968)**

In 1958, Douglas continues to argue that the dance was only ever danced by Jackie Kermode, even though many other Fishermen were very good dancers. In some undated essays by Douglas the story is different each time again, in 'A Manx Folk Dancer' (MNHL 09545 Box 5) Douglas was taken to the Kermode's house many times by her grandfather and saw the dance performed. When she began collecting dances proper, she went back to write it down. In another fragment Douglas had been told of an old fisherman who could do the 'real old Manx sword dance' and Douglas went to search for him expecting just another English or Scottish sword dance. In her 1973 paper 'Hunting the Dance in Mann' Douglas again states that her grandfather Pat took her to see Kermode and he danced it straight away and he again drank whisky.

In the notes accompanying the LP *Daunsey'n Theayagh Vannin* (1973) it is referred to as 'Reeaghyn dy Vannin (Dirk Dance)' and is noted as being accepted as the typical Manx national dance, again reinforcing the story of the dance being performed by young princes of the royal Manx line when they took arms and then at the Tynwald Ceremony. However, in the Ian O'Leary Lecture given at Yn Chruinnaght in 1979, Douglas states that the dance was collected for a lecture given in 1925 and then approval was sought from Kermode to teach the dance to a non-Kermode boy. In 1983 the dance was republished in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* this time with even more additions to the story; the dance was thought to be part of a Celtic Tanist Ceremony when the heir to the Manx throne took arms, although when the Norse took over they were not good dancers and so the local Celtic Chieftain took over and danced it instead. This family was the Mac Diarmid clan whose name eventually became Kermode. These notes also mention the ceremonial beaker of whiskey.



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### A1.21.3 The modern exponent of the Dirk Dance in 1983 (MNHL 9545).

These regular changes in story and expansion of the myth associated with the dance are seen by many modern academics as cause to question the authenticity of the dance. Miller (2004) certainly feels this and repeatedly refers to the increasing complexity of the name of the dance over time as evidence of some kind of hidden agenda. It would appear however that the alteration of fact and the confusion over Kermode's date of death and the date of collection have cast much doubt on Douglas' intentions and the truth of any of the history. Carswell (2004) does cite anecdotal evidence that Kermode's daughter told Paul Bradford, the modern day exponent of the dance and a descendent of the Kermode family, that Douglas had visited her parents' house when she was a girl. None of the modern academics mention that the steps and movements of the dance have not changed significantly from the first reference to it to its final published version in *Rinkaghyn Vannin*.

To conclude, the most likely history of the dance is this. It was collected by Douglas from Kermode in approximately 1910, over a number of visits. It is unknown whether Douglas knew of the dance before meeting Kermode and seems likely that, as a young girl, various people accompanied her to the Kermode's house. Kermode may or may not have on one of these occasions drunk a glass of whiskey before performing the dance for Douglas. Douglas explained why she was collecting dances and folklore and so Kermode agreed to teach it to her to pass on to others, along with other dancers. The dance had been passed down to Kermode by his father and to his father by another family member and there was some legend that the dance was originally performed by the Kings of Man, although no definite details as to whether these were Celtic or Norse kings. Douglas then dug out the notes to perform the dance for the EFDS Easter Vacation school and taught it to Stowell (there is correspondence from Stowell to Douglas asking for help as he cannot get the dance right and will she go and show him again (MNHL 09545 Box 21)). Stowell taught it to six boys at Albert Road, Cain being the best who then performed it for Douglas Kennedy. Kennedy became so excited at HIS discovery of a new Sword Dance that it was given massive attention from the folk dancing community and as such soon became big business and very popular, to the point of eclipsing all other Manx dances. This popularity caused much speculation and discussion of the dance and the increasing number of papers written about it led to a swelling of the legend and myth surrounding. Its demonstration to others caused external speculation as to the possible Scandinavian origins of the dance. As time went on and Douglas got older, and Stowell also began to tell his version of the story, the facts became a little muddled, dates became vague estimates and the story took on a life of its own. Once Douglas was an elderly lady the story was so well known a certain amount of myth was expected and the story became even more muddled. Upon Douglas' death her papers were not available and only the muddled, myth-ridden publications and memories were available to modern academics. Now that the original notes of Douglas can be accessed it is evident that the dance was collected whole and has remained virtually unaltered. How old the dance was

before it was collected will never be known, but it would seem that Vaughan Williams had nothing to worry about with regard to the dance being collected, in full, from demonstrations.

### **1.22 Cum yn Chenn Oanrey Cheh**

According to Douglas' *Folklore Notebook: Dances* (MNHL 09545 Box 9) the dance was collected from William Craine of Jurby from a live demonstration of the dance. Douglas also noted the tune, although later realised that it was identical to Clague's version of the tune, except each half of the tune is repeated for the dance. The dance appears to be noted exactly as it is performed today, with some very minor exceptions, which are to be expected over a 70 year period. The dance was also noted from Kelly 'Pat' from Baldrine who reportedly performed it many times for Douglas, although he missed out the distinctive clapping movement in each case. He apparently dances that movement in another jig and states that it does not belong to Cum yn Chenn Oanrey Cheh. Kermode and 'Pat Moore' also performed it in the same way as Craine. Mrs Scarffe from Maughold told Douglas that it was a very popular dance when she was a girl, men dancing it at mheilleas, weddings and in pubs, where they would be rewarded with drink. She also points out that the only men who will tell Douglas about dances will be those who like a drink. Stowell's essay on his composition of Manx dances (Manninagh: 1972) states that Douglas found the notes to the dance in a notebook given to her by her great-grandfather and taught some of it to Stowell. However, Stowell's references to this dance are very complex as he also composed a solo jig and called it Cum yn Chenn Oanrey Cheh (see Manx Jig).

The dance was evidently worked out, however, in preparation for the visit of the EFDS in 1929 or shortly afterwards. This is evidenced in correspondence between Arnold Foster and Douglas in 1931 where Foster asks for the instructions for 'the Step dance' which was performed at the Celtic congress and that resembles an Irish Reel (we shall assume he means in structure and not in time signature), the tune was subsequently sent to Kennedy in preparation for the 1932 All England Festival, although it was then rejected. In 1936 Stowell eventually performed a solo jig at the Albert Hall which would appear to most likely be that composed by himself, not that collected by Douglas. There is contemporary photographic evidence of him dancing a solo jig, although the only photograph shows him performing a 'scrape' and incorrectly at that as the back of the photograph tells us. This step begins both the collected solo jig and the dance composed by Stowell, but the photograph shows Stowell's arms extended. This is now associated with the beginning of the Manx Jig and thought to be an invention of Stowell's (Carswell: 2004) whereas Cum yn Chenn Oanrey Cheh now begins with the arms folded in front of the dancer at shoulder height.

It is worth noting that although the step is referred to as a high reel, the step now known by that name does not appear in either solo jig. In un-dated notes in the papers of Stowell held in the Manx Museum (MNHL 09683) appears a tune called 'Manx Jig (Keep the Old Petticoat

Warm) P.L. Stowell.) The notes state 'first danced by PLS[towell] at Albert Hall in 1936 – International Festival' and implies that a purt-y-beeayl should be used. Douglas does not at any time mention a purt-y-beeayl from her collection and no words appear anywhere. It is also worth noting that the tune given is not the tune collected by Douglas, but that published by Stowell alongside his solo jig, now more often known as Girl's Jig. In Stowell's article written for *Manninagh* in 1972 he states that it was his jig that he performed at the Royal Albert Hall. He goes on to say that as he was only taught a small bit of Douglas' dance and no more, he made up his set of figures to the same tune.

In 1937 the dance is categorised as complete in Douglas' paper on the notation and revival of Manx dances and is described as a step dance performed by one or two men on a springboard in public houses and it is pointed out that the dance is not ritual. Further confusion is caused in 1953 when in a newspaper report (*Ramsey Courier and Northern Advertiser*: 18/09/53) it can be seen that at a Celtic concert at Ramsey Keep the Old Petticoat Warm, the English translation of Cum yn Chenn Oanrey Cheh, a well established favourite, was performed by Miss Vera Burns. Douglas already stated that the dance she collected was performed by men and it is possible that this was a performance by the MFDS, who were led by Stowell, and was actually a performance of Stowell's version of the dance. The same year Douglas' collected dance was published in *Seven Manx Folk Dances: Set II*, described only as a solo jig with notes indicating the same dance as is performed today. Stowell, however, in his manuscript of 1972 writes that the published dance is in a different form, but then this is crossed out. It would imply that this was different to what he had been taught, but 20 to 25 years had passed and he admitted having only been taught a small portion of the dance. His retraction may mean that there is no truth in this later assertion.

After being requested by letter to attend a meeting in 1955 on the notation of Stowell's dances Car ny Ferrishyn and The Manx Jig, Douglas replies requesting that they use different names and tunes for the dances composed by Stowell, rather than using those collected by herself, and that they be treated as composed dances, not as those collected (MNHL 09545 Box 19). It would appear that the tune as discussed earlier came to be used for the other dance. Stowell later states, however, that he did not want to interfere with Douglas' dance so found another tune of the same name (*Manninagh*: 1972) (See notes on Manx Jig).

It would seem likely then that the dance referred to on the sleeve notes of the LP *Daunsey'n Theayagh Vannin* (1973) refer to Douglas' jig as it describes high leaps, none of which are found in Stowell's jig. The jig as collected by Douglas was then republished in 1983 in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* with no additional information other than citing Douglas as the collector.

### **1.23 Shooyl Ineenyn**

There is very little evidence of the origins of this dance. No notes on its collection appear in Douglas' papers other than one reference (MNHL 09545 Box 7: Dances Folder) on a separate sheet, which is both handwritten and typed. The tune 'Hie Mee Magh dy Hail!' is transcribed in Douglas' hand with 'from Mrs Callow, Cardle Veg, Maughold' but the name or initials of the person who noted it is indecipherable. Handwritten notes of the dance appear with a complex diagram demonstrating the movement into two lines from the processional circle. Then a neat typed version follows with additional information indicating that the dances used to be performed at the Michaelmas hiring fair where farmers found their female servants for the year. The fair was reportedly held at the Mitre Hotel in Kirk Michael and 'in recent years' (unfortunately the date is unknown) the girls only walked, but they had used to perform this processional dance. It is not indicated who the dance was collected from or whether it was taken from demonstration or description. In similar notes held amongst notes for the publication of *Rinkaghyn Vannin* (MNHL 09545 Box 19) the description is given as the dance appears today and again explains about the hiring fairs although only tentatively: 'it was suggested that this dance could be associated with the traditional hiring custom' implying that this is not a definite fact. Douglas then explains that the tunes to which it is performed are two variants of 'Hie Mee Magh' played either side of a variant of 'O Sheign Dooin' and is not to a tune called Shooyl Ineenyn, although the two tunes played together are generally referred to as Shooyl Ineenyn today.

Two fragments refer to Douglas nearly being hired at the Michaelmas fair, although neither mentions the dance (MNHL 09545 Box 1 and Douglas: 1973). In 1983 the dance and tune were published in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* with it clearly stated that the dance was performed by women at Michaelmas hiring fair on 29 September and that Douglas collected it. The music is given but no mention of its construction from two different tunes is made. In 1986 in an article in *Instep* dance magazine, Mal Hannan states that the dance was collected from an old woman who lived in the hills up above Kirk Michael and that this dance used to be danced at the Michaelmas hiring fair in Kirk Michael after the midday meal and then implies that it was during the collection of the dance that Douglas was herself nearly hired. Hannan does not give his sources, although it is likely that he met Douglas in her later years and may have collected anecdotal evidence from her, although this cannot be verified without further research and interviews.

### **1.24 Mylecharane's March**

References to this dance can be found as far back as Waldron's descriptions of the Isle of Man in 1726. A full description of the dance appears in Douglas' *Folklore Notebook: Dances* (MNHL 09545 Box 9) with seven informants named, 'Granny', Mrs Callow of Cardle Veg, Mrs Olivia from Agneash, Tom Kermod from the Lag, Philip Moore and William Quine of Peel, and Kelly 'Pat' from Baldrine.

In the first description by 'Granny' it is ostensibly a collation of many descriptions offered to Douglas by her grandmother. These descriptions are based on many observations of the dance when Douglas' grandmother was a young girl, most likely to be from the mid nineteenth century. The tune is described as a variant of the song tune and was played by a fiddler in Lezayre, who was also familiar with the song tune. The dance was said to be performed for New Year and the Boat Supper, although it is thought that it was only used at the latter to replace the correct dance that had been lost over time and it was rightfully only performed at the former. The description is basic at best, is written out in prose and involves terms such as 'capers'. However the use of the term 'Sand step' appears and had been described to Douglas' grandmother by her father as the hardest of all the Manx steps and so was not taught to his children along with the simpler steps they learnt from him. Evidently these descriptions get a little muddled and Douglas describes them as 'approximately correct.' The description draws on 'Pancakes and Flitters' to describe one move and so was evidently collected after this dance/game. Although often lacking in detail, the description is very much as the dance is now performed today. The cutting off of the fiddler's head is described although the description of the involvement of the Laare Vane is very cursory and implies prior knowledge of both the practice and definition of the Laare Vane, an element of the dance that will be fully discussed later.

Mrs Callow of Cardle Veg also remembered seeing the dance performed although cannot describe it nearly so well. She was a girl when she saw it performed as the end of the White Boys' play approximately 50 years previously, which would date it to between 1860 and 1880 and she assumed that no one living would be likely to be in a position to show Douglas the dance as it had been dying out then. Reportedly the battle-like portions of the dance often became real fights and the final section 'Cutting Off the Fiddler's Head' was the most important part of the dance. Callow referred Douglas to Jackie Kermode from who she had collected the Dirk Dance, evidence that they knew one another, but he remembered it vaguely as he had only seen it, not taken part in it. Mrs Olivia provides an even briefer outline as she only remembers a stick dance performed at Christmas by the Snaefell miners and gives a date of 70 years ago when she saw it. It cannot be known, however, when this note was written; it possible that it gives the dance a date 20 years previous to the earliest implied by Mrs Callow, but frustratingly may also date the collection 20 years later. Douglas also asserts that it is unlikely that Mrs Olivia would remember much of the dance, as she was a devout Methodist and she not only disapproved of dance, but also of associated drunkenness.

Tom Kermode, Bwoie Doal of the Clague and Gill collection, was more forthcoming. He knew the dance as 'Cutting Off the Fiddler's head', said it was performed at the Boat Supper in Port Erin, and that it had been performed to the tune 'Ec ny Fiddleryn'. Assuming that this is an

abbreviated version of 'Ec Norree ny Fiddler' or 'Ec Nollick Ball ny Fiddleryn' in Jerry's Kiaull Vannin (1983) the former is also in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time although without a dotted rhythm that would match so well with the steps as performed today and the latter is only a fragment and likely to be poorly performed version of the former. Kermode was able to demonstrate the holding of the sticks, the turning under the sticks performed in pairs (a movement Douglas found very difficult) and some of the steps, mainly the sand step with only two kicks out, although the full step now has three. The movements and steps he demonstrated appear to collaborate the description given to Douglas by her grandmother. Kelly 'Pat' also remembers the dance and describes and demonstrates the sand step, the simple way with two kicks and the more advanced way with three. She also notes that he remembers little of the dance, but concurs with Douglas' collected information when prompted but is prone to agreement whether he really remembers or not. Kelly also describes the use of sand and another dance using the same step called the 'Sand Dance'. He knows nothing more about this dance, although Douglas cross references to another notebook, 'Manx Dance 2' containing information on this sand dance, but this notebook has not yet been found.

Moore and Quine, despite Mrs Callow's assertions, provide Douglas with a partial demonstration of the dance and again recollect it being performed at the boat supper in Port Erin, but not ever in Peel. The demonstration is not ideal however, as it is only of the hey and only for four. Moore and Quine appear to persuade two men who did not already know it to help and did not seem sure how it would have worked for six people. The entry for this dance ends with a description of this hey for six using a diagram and description alluding to lettered points marked on the illustrative diagram. Despite this demonstration, following the performance to the EFDS in 1929 Douglas describes this dance as having been reconstructed from notes and not noted from personal observations of a demonstration (MNHL 9545 Box 9).

In 1931 Foster suggests Mylecharane's March as a possible third dance for the proposed volume of Manx dances, alongside the Dirk Dance and Step Dance (evidently 'Cum yn Chenn Oanrey Cheh'). The tune for the dance first appears as an apparent second section or development of the song tune in Gills' *Manx National Music* (1898) and so is likely to have been of his own creation. This does cause some questions to be raised as to the date of the dance. However, if this tune was offered up as a possible tune during collection instead of 'Ec Ny Fiddleryn' then it is possible that the confusion stems from mis-remembrances by the informant and not as evidence against the provenance of the dance. In 1931 the dance was performed in full, with the tune 'Mylecharane's March' as part of the Manx programme at the All England Festival at the Albert Hall by a team taught by Stowell.

However, Stowell appears to find distinct difficulties with the dance. In correspondence between Douglas and Stowell (MNHL 09545 Box 21) he feels that the 'cast' is out of place

and so is trying to change it but with no success. Douglas' response to this is not known. Another fragment from his papers reads: 'I do not recommend this dance was one to be danced by beginners. Morris dancers with a knowledge of coordinated movement can manage it, but with inexperienced dancers it will be an uphill struggle.' (MNHL 09683)

Douglas' gives both names for the dance in her 1937 paper, although the dance is also described as being regarded with fear and believed magical or even druidical and a description concurrent with the original notes is again given. Another fragment from Douglas (MNHL 09545 Box 5) gives more information on the name. The dance is reportedly called Mylecharane's March, a name that seems to only be likely after 1898 and taken from the tune name. Cutting Off the Fiddler's Head is the name given only to the final movement. However, Douglas also states that the dance is also called Roie Pherick or Run Patrick and that it was performed at any kind of festivity including boat suppers and mheilleas but mainly at New Year. The provenance for this alternative name is not given, although it may represent the original name of the dance before Mylecharane became associated with it. Subsequent information in this fragment agrees with Douglas' collected notes including the demonstration by four lads, the description from her grandmother, the sand step from Kelly and that the dance was pieced together from descriptions and deciphered with Stowell.

In 1948 in a paper given to the Scottish Anthropological Society, Douglas states that the dance is only performed as part of a ceremony and to practise and describe the ritual Laare Vane element again. Shortly afterwards Stenning (1950) links the dance to a well known British game called 'Cutting Off the Fiddler's Head' and also to 'oranges and lemons'. In the *Folklorist* in 1957 Douglas states that her great-grandfather danced the dance in 1870 and that her grandmother saw it was passed it on to Douglas. This would imply, from previous evidence, that the dance was collected around 1920. Douglas 'feels' that the dance is very old and begins to link it to ancient war dances.

The dance was not published in *Five Manx Folk Dances: Set I or Seven Manx Folk Dances: Set II* although it was evidently an important part of the ritual Manx dance tradition. This is possibly because the dance was deemed too difficult or ritualistic for public consumption and had not enjoyed the success of the Dirk Dance. The tune was played on the LP *Daunsey'n Theayagh Vannin* (1973) where it is described as a 'difficult ritual stick dance' and despite the early date of collection and first performance, the first publication of the notes was not until 1983 in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* and the notes and descriptive notes concur with Douglas' original notes.



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**A1.24.1 Mylechrane's March showing the hey and Laare Vane. Albert Road  
Dance Team c. 1935 (MNHL PG3652/3)**

A note regarding the Laare Vane or white mare should be added here. The Laare Vane was a representation of a horse carried out by an eighth member of the team; six dancers, one musician preferably a fiddler, and the Laare Vane. The head according to Douglas should be made of wood and painted white, although Stowell does at one point source a real head. The Laare Vane should caper around the dancers as they perform and when the fiddler has been ritually dispensed with, the body is carried to the Laare Vane. The fiddler's head was placed in the Laare Vane's lap and questions were asked of the 'corpse,' the answers to which were deemed oracular. In some descriptions the Laare Vane begins as a man who chases nearby women around. When one is caught she takes the horse head and sheet covering and becomes the Laare Vane. According to Douglas in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* the questions asked were dependent on the event at which the dance and ritual were performed.

This tradition is not peculiar to the Isle of Man. In Wales the 'Mari Lwyd' can still be seen at the Calennig or New Year celebrations and are usually created using a real mare's skull, in modern representations often sporting flashing eyes. Across England the Hobby Horse is a prevalent part of many May Day celebrations and can even be found as far afield as the Basque country. In Cornwall the tradition has developed into the 'obby oss' of Padstow May day celebrations and is no longer recognisable as a horse, and appears to be more like an African medicine man. However, the major part of these Cornish celebrations is the apparent 'death' and 'resurrection' of the beast in accordance with the music (Kennedy: 1950). In the Isle of Man, this cycle of life and death seems related to the 'death' of the fiddler and oracular

position opening a gate to the future of the Manx tradition. However, it is evident that in each area the representation of a horse has developed into distinctly different physical representations and occupies different contexts.

### **1.25 Bwoaill Baccagh**

This is an unusual dance involving the use of short knives. Modern dancers have been heard to say that it is the most ancient of all the Manx dances, by way of explaining its peculiar nature, but also that the dance was created in the later twentieth century based on a very vague description; popular opinion today on the provenance of this dance is widely varied.

As seen previously in the notes on Chyndaa yn Bwoailley a tune named the Frog dance is confused with the tune for the couples dance in the 1924 edition of the JFSS and the tune is then also identified as called 'Bouill Backer' in Clague's original notes. In Douglas' *Folklore Notebook: Dances* the dance appears as a complete dance for six men under the title Frog Dance. Here states the tune 'Hi Juan Jiggison' is given as the correct tune to the dance but Chyndaa yn Bwoailley and Creg Willy Syl are offered as alternatives. The 'squatting' figure was still performed at the time of collection from Mr Corlett, a grocer from Ramsey, and Kelly Baldwin (possibly John Kelly from Baldrine in accordance with Douglas' paper of 1958) gave further descriptions, if a little vague, of other movements. Seemingly the squatting figure was seen just as a solo performance of a repeated step, now commonly known as the 'Frog Step', similar to the Cossack step in which the dancer crouches out throws his feet out to each side alternately.

The notes are expanded later with descriptions offered up by James Quine of Peel and Mrs Bridson of Glen Maye, the latter of whom provided the tune, and these are given below in a dance notation format, unlike the prose of previous notes. The date of this addition is not known, but it likely to be post 1937. In *Manx Dances: Their notation and revival* Douglas notes that although many people were asked and could lift the tune, twice as Chyndaa yn Bwoailley, no demonstration or description other than the single Frog Step had been obtained. It is also suggested that the dance used sticks, although the finished dance uses knives. This is possibly due to descriptions and recollections being muddled with Mylecharane's march which is also for six men and has some movements in common. This seems even more likely as the dance is associated with the Boat Suppers according to Douglas' paper of 1957 in the *Folklorist*. It is possible that this was the dance Mylecharane's March took the place of when it ceased to be regularly performed. The frog step is compared with steps from the Cobbler's jig, Lancashire.

The dance is then published in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* in 1983 alongside a tune with a different rhythmic structure to Chyndaa yn Bwoailley, but with some similarities in melodic patterns. A

full notation of the dance is given although the accompanying notes cite Caesar Cashen, James Quine and William Quane of Peel as the informants.

### **1.26 Lheim y Braddan (Salmon Leap)**

This dance was never fully completed. The first reference to it comes in Douglas' manuscript notebook *Folklore Notebook: Dances* (MNHL 09545 Box 9) under the title 'The Salmon Leap'. The dance has been mentioned to Douglas by a number of people, although they know very little of it and she cannot find a demonstration. She notes that it is a kind of jig or hornpipe, which is interesting as no hornpipes as such appear in the Clague and Gill collections. Only one figure is known of, and that is the physical salmon leap itself in which a man lies on his back and using only a kind of rolling flick leaps to his feet. This movement can be seen today as part of gymnastic routines and break dancing. It is evident that Douglas has discussed this dance with W.W. Gill who informs her that a man in Glen Rushen called Kelly the Blackguard can perform the move, although as yet Douglas has been unable to find him as he only rarely lives in his house. Gill suggests that this is but a single movement that could be used in any dance and compares the movement to a similar feat performed by boys in Scandinavia to represent the movement of a salmon. These notes evidently predate the visit of the EFDS in 1929 as in a paper on the ceremonial folk song and mumming of the Isle of Man, Douglas refers to the dance and to Kelly but has still not met him.

In Douglas' 1937 paper the dance is still incomplete and Kelly has not yet been found. However the original notes have been expanded on and it is described as a dance or ceremony performed by the fishermen of Dalby including a skipper, mate, skit or fool, and six men. A description is given of the salmon figure and the dance as a whole compared to the Mollag Dance.

There is no further information on this dance until Douglas' paper of 1957 in the *Folklorist*. The dance is now deemed ritual and linked with Finn Mac Cooil [sic] and the salmon of wisdom and this is cited as a direct link with Celtic pagan religious beliefs. Douglas then goes on to link this with prehistoric burial site Cashtal yn Ard which she describes as a Druidical temple. This all seems rather fantastical as none of the early evidence for this dance mentions druids, and Cashtal yn Ard can be found in Maughold, not anywhere near Dalby! The fishing references have also been altered and the skipper and mate are now known as the king and queen and the six men are referred to as priests, although the 'fool/skit' is preserved. The priests are said to carry wands of elder to hit the skit with and the 'salmon' (it is not clear which if the characters plays the salmon or if this is a separate performer) leaps out of the basket using the 'salmon leap' and dances with the king and queen.

There is a further fifteen year gap between references and in 1973 Douglas describes her eventual meeting with Kelly, although no precise date is given for this meeting. Kelly is

attributed with being the only man alive who could perform the move; the dance had been performed by boat crews at Niarbyl, near Dalby, and Kelly was the only one left. The description of her meeting with Kelly is very romantic and literary in style. Reportedly Douglas met him on the road and did not recognise him as she thought him a 'gypsy', upon realising his identity she returned to find him. She took a different route to him and cut him off, upon which he reportedly mistook her for the Lhiannon Shee, a spirit in Manx folklore, as she had seemingly magicked herself in front of him as he had not seen her overtake. After he had recovered from the shock he demonstrated the leap in the road and described the dance to Douglas. It is not known if he described a dance relating to fishing, or the later pagan interpretation.

A subsequent description of the dance was included in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* although the publication is quite different to previous descriptions. The notes are evidently provided in the sake of interest and not for use in performance. The dance was said to be collected from Captain Thomas Caine of the 'Sarah Blanche', a former skipper in Peel and employee of the Steam Packet Company, who described it as a fishermen's dance. However, Douglas also cites Northern farmers such as William Caine of Jurby Curragh, and it is therefore possible that Thomas gave the Dalby description and William Caine linked it with Cashtal yn Ard. Douglas also says that she collected the leap from Kelly the Blackguard in the 1920s, although this is unlikely as she did not have it in 1928 as seen previously. Another man called Kelly from Baldrine also described portions of the dance to Douglas, as well as much of the costume and said it had been performed by the Mollag Bands. The costumes include long white tunics and head cloths, possibly later being interpreted as druidical garb. Steps are suggested, although not from demonstration or description, but the number of dancers and characters have changed again. This time the dance includes Yn Cummaltagh (the resident), Yn Eiyreydeyr (the pursuer), Yn Braddan (the salmon) and ten Guillyn (boys). Between 1973 and 1980 four extra dancers have been added. The movements are described and each Guilley holds an osier rod, evidently previously described as a wand. The movements bear striking similarities to those found in Mylecharane's March and White Boy's. It is possible that this is an alternative version of one or both of these dances or has evolved from a similar root to be regionally/culturally specific, i.e. more relevant to fishing.

### **1.27 Rinkey ny Ghuilleyn Baney**

Also described as the White Boys Dance, this sword dance for six men appears to be a version of the common rapper and sword dances found across the British Isles and predominantly associated with the tradition of Mumming.



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**A1.27.1 Members of an early White Boy's troupe in Ramsey. (MNHL PG1150/1)**



By kind permission of Manx National Heritage

**A1.27.2 Young White Boys from Ramsey. (MNHL PG1150/1-2)**

Relatively early photographic depictions of the white boys can be found and Clague (1896) alludes to Mumming as does Gill (Manx Scrapbook date). The tune now associated with the dance is included in the 1924 edition of the JFSS and categorised as a dance tune.

Douglas does not appear to have collected the dance as in correspondence between Douglas and Stowell in 1935 Stowell is 'still working on it' and cannot find a definitive description of the final movement (MNHL 09545 Box 21). However, the dance was performed at the Albert Hall in 1936 and in 1937 appears as complete in Douglas paper on the revival of Manx dances. It is posited that the dance was allowed by the church as it was deemed as harmless as carols and while it is recognised that the dance is similar to the English, it is stated that this dance is different and does not finish with the swords locked into a star shape. In her 1948 address to the Scottish Anthropological Society Douglas links the dance with the play 'St George and the Turkish Knight' now more commonly known as the White Boys play, although photographic evidence implies that this was the case long before this paper.

It would appear, however, that Stowell and Douglas had different versions of the dance (Bazin: 1998) and it is possible that discrepancies in descriptions and performance can be explained by this. For example, the dance as published in *Rinkaghyn Vannin* ends with the swords in a lock. However, this is also cited as the version collected by Stowell and it is Douglas that states that it is not a part of the Manx dance. As the dance is very standard in England it is possible that Stowell's version has been influenced by his knowledge of other versions of the dance already, but this will remain pure conjecture until further evidence can be found. However, the similarity of this dance to others and its common appearance in early sources may explain the lack of information to be found. It would appear that there was little to discuss and little about it sufficiently surprising or new to warrant extended debate or exposé. It is a dance well established on the Isle of Man and evidently based in a strong tradition found across the British Isles and has enjoyed this status since before the turn of the twentieth century.



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**A1.27.3 Whiteboys c. 1979 in Castletown. (MNHL PG6821/1)**

## **2. The Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances**

### **2.1 Daunse Straid**

Translated as 'The Street Dance', this dance was composed by Philip Leighton Stowell whilst still teaching at Albert Road. Designed to be a processional dance to follow along behind a band the dance was then taught to Stowell's Castletown dancers in 1937. In his description of this dance Stowell refers to the 'Gaelic Reel Step' and the published notes describe this as a skip-change-of-step. There is no evidence for this being a step collected on the Isle of Man although a similar step does occur in Fathaby Jig. The dance is not tune specific. (Stowell: 1972; Stowell:1981)

### **2.2 Daunse ny Moain**

The Turf Dance in English has a slightly confusing history. It is performed to the tune Hie Mee Stiagh or Cutting the Turf, a song with rather vulgar words. Although the dance was compiled by Stowell in 1955 (Stowell:1981), references to dances with associated names appear earlier. In 1930 in correspondence to Douglas from Ruth Hedger (MNHL 09545 Box 19), Hedger mentions a composed dance, composed by a 'he', called the Widow's House, which she was led to believe was traditional but was incorrect. The full title of the tune to The Turf Dance is Hie Mee Stiagh dys Thie Ben-Treoghe or I went into the Widow's House. Again in Douglas' papers (MNHL 09545 Box 29) notes can be found which include reference to a dance called Hie Mee Stiagh, which is described as a six-hand ring dance. The tune appears on the LP *Daunseyn Theayagh Vannin* (1973) and is associated with a composed dance by Stowell and in a number of Stowell's notes he gives a full description of the composition of the dance (Stowell: 1972 & MNHL 09683).

Stowell composed the dance for the young Methodists of Arbory Street Chapel in Castletown who were under the instruction of Maisie Allison, a dancer taught by Stowell. From Stowell's notes it is evident that he is aware of Manx traditions regarding the collection of turf for winter fuel and in particular writes of the tradition of 'stealing' a piece of turf from a neighbour to start the fire with on 21<sup>st</sup> December or St. Thomas' day. Although this larceny seems unfair this was reportedly done with the unspoken knowledge that this was a reciprocal agreement. Once a fire was lit on this day it was not to be touched by a poker, but should be kept burning all day. The refusal to use an iron poker is associated with the wounds of Christ that were caused by iron nails by Stowell, although the mystical powers of iron to ward off evil is a regular feature of Manx folklore. The dance was then composed with the joy of gathering turf in mind and so the turf was venerated in a similar way to the wren in Hunt the Wren by being placed atop a pole and decorated with streamers. Stowell then lost his own notes and the dance was not resurrected again until 1970 when it was performed in front of the Queen Elizabeth II.

### **2.3 Manx Jig**

The history of this dance is, as seen earlier, hopelessly caught up with that of the other solo Manx jig, Cum yn Chen Oanrey Cheh. However, although the references to its performance cannot be distinguished from that of Cum yn Chen Oanrey Cheh in the most part, Stowell does tell the story of its composition for an article in *Manninagh* (1972). When Douglas found the notes to Cum yn Chen Oanrey Cheh in the notes of her great-grandfather she taught some of it to Stowell, but not the entire dance. As Stowell did not have the whole dance, he composed some figures himself and titled it Cum Shenn Oanrey Cheh after Douglas' collected dance, and performed it at the Albert Hall in 1936.



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#### **A2.3.1 "PLS Manx Jig 'High Reels' N.B. (Free toe should be straight down, not held as in photograph)' (MNHL PG4963/1)**

The tune was also composed by Stowell, although he alludes in some notes to a purt-y-beayll version, words to which have not yet been found. In the 1950s Douglas requested that the MFDS find an alternative name and tune for Stowell's dance to avoid confusion. In his article for *Manninagh* (1972), Stowell says this was his idea and he then went on to collect a tune from a sheep farmer he met on the Carnanes. Stowell asked if he had heard of a tune called 'Keep the Old Petticoat Warm' a translation of Cum yn Shen Oanrey Cheh and the farmer told him of a tune called 'Red Petticoat'. This tune had a song all about a wedding that was to take place, which had ten verses. This sounds likely to be a local variant of the 'Manx Wedding' as published by Gill in 1896. However, Stowell assumes that this is a dance tune and mentions the plight of a purt y beayll singer having to sing ten verses. The tune is then collected from a Mrs Watterson from the Level, but as Stowell could not find the words he

composed some himself about a wedding and keeping a petticoat aired. By this time the dance is most often performed by women, particularly Pat Nicholson.

The dance was published in 1981 in the *Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances* although the tune given is cited as composed by Stowell himself and is evidently not that collected from Mrs Watterson. It is stated that the arms should be held out to the side throughout the dance.

In her introduction to this volume of dances, Douglas refers to a Southside Jig as collected by Stowell as a boy in Castletown. It seems likely that this refers to this dance, although this information does not tally with that of Stowell's own essay on the dance. It is possible that this refers to Daunse Noo George, which was collected by Stowell, but is not a jig and is a sword dance. It is likely that this small mystery may now never be solved.

#### **2.4 Manx Duet Dance – Fouyr Oarn (Gathering in the Barley)**

Another dance composed by Stowell, although he often uses the term compiled, this time for couple Maisie Allison and Daphne Corlett for a performance at the Victoria Road P.T.A. The only other couples dance available to them was Chyndaa yn Bwoailley which they felt was a little 'hackneyed.' It was based on a poem by Stowell inspired by watching a barley harvest. The tune was composed to accompany the poem and the dance written to the tune. The notes, tune for piano and poem were published in *Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances* in 1981 and the poem is evidently intended as a purt y beayll. (MNHL 09683, Stowell:1972 & Stowell: 1981)

#### **2.5 Yn Billey Keirn (The Rowan Tree)**

Stowell was evidently interested and aware of much Manx folklore. Within his papers is a lecture, one of a series of at least 17, on the folklore surrounding the rowan tree. Inspired by this tree associated with the cross at Calvary and many Manx superstitions, Stowell again wrote an eight-verse poem about the tree. As with Gathering in the Barley, Stowell then wrote a tune based upon the poem and a dance based on the tune, this time for six. He had purposely tried to compose a dance different to others and so added in step dancing and reels of three. In 1972 the dance was performed to a purt y beayll sung by a choir of twelve girls, the first time a choir was used for this purpose. The dance should be performed near a branch of the rowan tree, in keeping with the traditions outlined in Stowell's lecture. (MNHL 09683, MNHL 09545 Box 14 & Stowell: 1981)

It is worth noting that the tune given for the dance in *Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances* is not the tune most commonly used in modern performances. The tune now commonly referred to by many musicians as Billey Keirn is actually that written for Gathering in the Barley, but with the A tune and B tune swapped.

## **2.6 Daunse Noo George**

Collected as part of the White Boys Mummer's Play this is the only dance in *Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances* (1981) that was not composed or compiled by Stowell. This dance was performed at the end of the play if the actors could not perform the proper dance for six, and was performed by the character of St George, hence the name. Within Stowell's notes (MNHL 09683) the words to a purt y beayll in Manx and English appear, although these were not published.

Stowell came across the dance when searching for a dance that could be performed on a small stage. Lizzie Corrin remembered a dance sometimes performed at the end of the Mummer's play that only needed the space taken by two crossed swords. Stowell himself was instructed how to do it by Tommy the Councillor, Ada Corrin and James Mylchreest, although found it difficult to learn from their instruction. Stowell remodelled the tune from one found in a book of tunes owned by his father and Douglas composed a purt-y-beayll for it, which was regularly sung by Stowell's daughter, Aileen Hall. It was traditionally a man's dance, although some women did perform it. The dance was performed in 1960 at the crowning of the festival queen in Castletown Square.

## **2.7 Daunse son Troor (Dance for Three)**

This is a popular dance performed by all the modern dance groups, usually under the title Dance for Three and to the tune Three Little Boats, not the tune published in *Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances*. The MFDS do, however, still use the original tune.

Stowell composed this dance for himself and two women, Margy Stewart and Anne Gawne, based on steps and movements of other dances. The tune was composed based on a children's hymn 'Springtime Clothes...' and Stowell notes that he did not ever compose a purt-y-beayll for it. It is apparent that the dance was originally written with honours to begin, but these were not included in the publication and are not performed today. (Stowell: 1972, MSS09863 & Stowell: 1981)

## **2.8 Madolcogh**

First performed in 1948 by Tony Archibald and Aileen Hall in Dublin, Cork and Kilkenny (MNHL 09683), this dance was again composed for Maisie Allison and Daphne Corlett after the success of Gathering in the Barley. The dance specifically uses the siding step as shown to Stowell by Bella Garrett while in Ramsey as part of Flitter Dance, but also by Mrs Armour, a Navy WREN who also knew Irish and Scottish dances. This time the dance was written but no tune could be found. Inspired by the sound of a boat in the bay, a kind of 'chig-a-chig' noise, a tune was composed and in 1972 (Stowell: 1972) Stowell was trying to compose a purt y beayll. The dance was named after Maisie and Daphne by mixing their names together.

### **2.9 Gorse Sticks or Brasnagyn Aittin**

Once again this dance was composed by Stowell based on a poem; this time inspired by meeting a man on Spanish head collecting 'Gorse bons'. Stowell describes Gorse bons as four pieces of gorse tied together, reportedly called a 'kiare' after the four gospel writers (MNHL 09683), although kiare is simply Manx for four. Stowell wanted to write a solo dance for Tony Archibald and so decided to use the poem as a port y beayll, although it meant a tune in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time which was difficult to write a dance to as all Manx steps have four beats in them. Stowell altered the steps accordingly, took the stick motifs from Myelcharane's March and used Gorse sticks to match with the poem and composed a dance, to be performed to the singing of Stowell's daughter, Aileen Hall (Stowell: 1972). The dance was published with its port y beayll in *Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances* in 1981 with a note stating that the sticks should be painted red. The dance is popular today as a solo dance for men, although plain sticks are now used, always gorse where possible.

### **3. Unpublished Dances**

#### **3.1 The Mollag Dance.**

There are no complete notes, descriptions or demonstrations of this dance, and it is possible that many fragments associated with it are in fact remembrances of other dances, such as White Boy's, Bwoaill Baccagh or the Salmon Leap.

The dance was performed by a group of men on St Stephen's Day and was said to inspire great fear in those who saw it. Each town had their own Mollag Band, as the groups of men were known. In 1935 Douglas collected a figure of a dance where the men struck one another, the informant remembering an incident where her son had broken his nose and smashed his jaw whilst performing. Stowell was informed of this and wrote the figure down, and it was said to be danced to the tunes of Hunt the Wren or Cutting the Turf (MNHL 09545 Box 21). However this fragment has not been found in Douglas or Stowell's notes and has not been identified as relating to another dance. In Douglas' 1937 paper the dance is associated with fishermen in Castletown, and later general townsmen and was said to cause great terror and was thought to be magical and druidical. In an address to Rushen Internment Camp in 1940, Douglas refers to a movement in which a turnip is pierced with swords and carried off as a trophy in place of an enemy's head (MNHL 09545 Box 5).

This description is expanded slightly in Douglas' paper for the Scottish Anthropological Society in 1948 where she says that the dance survived until recently in Castletown and that she hoped to complete the description soon. It was performed after the Wren Boys and was danced to the same tune. The dance was in the form of a circle, the men performing a kind of spiral action with their bodies and occasionally jumping and shouting, although hands were not joined. The costumes were described as very similar to those worn by the White Boys; white tunics with rags of cloth sewn on and tall hats. In 1957 in *The Folklorist* Douglas has evidently gathered further information. It was known that each town had a Mollag Band of eight or ten men and they wore rough white suits, open sleeveless coats and capes, tall blue or black felt hats as used to be manufactured in Ballasalla, cross gartering and they covered themselves in ivy and other greenery. They would dance through the streets shouting and leaping, and Douglas is sure that the stamping high reel step is included, although she offers no evidence for this.

In a manuscript meant for publication in *Yn Lioran* (date unknown) the most complete description of the ritual can be found although there is still no complete dance, reportedly because observers were too scared to watch properly. Each town and village is noted to have its own team and version of the dance. The use of white in the costumes appears to be a common factor; Castletown wore white trousers and blue sweaters, Ramsey wore white suits and black cloaks and wore high crowned blue or black felt hats. Each team was said to carry

long staffs that were used in the dance and the staffs and dancers were decorated with ivy and other greenery. Each dancer was said to carry a 'mollag', or tar covered inflated pigs bladder used as small buoys, either on a string or attached to the staff, which they used to bang on doors, and sometimes people, as they passed. Each team seemed to have had a character called a fool, who had a blackened face and was often dressed as an animal. The important part of the dance appears to have been the high leaps and shouts at rhythmic intervals. It appears that this tradition also appeared in Ramsey, as dancers from this Parish reportedly would not associate with the sinister group, and elsewhere children were threatened with the Mollag Band if they misbehaved.

The fool was individual to each place and remembered quite clearly. In Maughold he was a sheep in a sheep skin with horns that butted people, Dalby it was a pig called Sonny meaning good luck, in Castletown he was Bimbo the Bear and performed tricks including a death and resurrection pattern, and in both Douglas and Ramsey was a Sambo, similar to that in the White Boys. Douglas was shown a Mollag suit and sketched it. The information on Castletown team was collected by Stowell from Miss E Corrin whose father had been in a Mollag Band, and passed on to Douglas. The article appears to be accompanied by a song and demonstration of the 'tripping step' but these are not now extant.

It would appear that, in keeping with White Boys, Mylecharane's March, the Salmon Leap and Bwoaill Baccagh, this dance is part of a complete tradition of male ritual dancing similar to those found in England, Ireland and Cornwall which form part of the Morris tradition. Similarities can be seen with many examples such as the blacked-up man-woman character common in many Morris sets, such as that of Winster in Derbyshire, and the entire Bacup Coco-nut dance team. Bimbo's death and resurrection ritual is similar to that found in the Padstow 'obby oss' ritual in Cornwall and to that in Mylecharane's March (Kennedy: 1949). These distinct elements are evidently what have made the dances so memorable and yet it is evidently their similarities that have made them difficult to note as they are regularly confused with one another.

### **3.2 Miscellaneous Dance A**

Within Douglas' *Folklore Notebook: Dances* is a loose leaf of paper with a fragment of a dance on it. There is no name on the dance and it is not recognisable as any dance performed today. The name 'Noon as Noal' is not found elsewhere in relation to dance, although translates simply and back and forth and so could just be a descriptive title for the movement:

Change Over      A. Music Twice.

1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> couples. Holding R hands all ... 4 side steps toward to R. 4 side steps to L, face partners on last beat. Balance without losing hands and woman pivots under man's R hand as they make a half turn to face centre.

2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> couples do the same. All are now in opposite positions.

Noon as Noal, B Music

Women stand still while men dance one reel step with partners, holding R hands, pass on the next woman on R, give L hand and dance 1 reel step with...

It is possible that this represents the first movement of a dance that was once longer.

**3.3 Miscellaneous Dance B**

Again there is no title for this dance or suggested music. However, the dance appears as a full set of typed notes in Douglas' papers (MNHL 09545 Box 4 and 19). It appears in a box of papers relating to the publication of *Rinkaghyn Vannin* and the formation of the organisation 'Sleih gyn Thie' so it would seem reasonable to theorise that this was a dance composed relatively late and offered for inclusion in *Rinkaghyn Vannin*. The use of a neck-scarf by the man and use of the term 'presence' as seen regularly in *Leighton Stowell book of Manx Dances* implies that it was possibly related to that publication and has been misfiled at some point. Although its origins are unknown, there was a period during the early competitions for the annual Yn Chruinnaght festival, when new couples dances were being composed, in a similar way to Gathering in the Barley. It is possible that this was one of these dances, although none of the dancers consulted remember it.

- Bar 1    Entrance. Partner dance four side steps to change places.
- 2        Both dance four side-steps back to own places.
- 3/4     Both dance two high reel steps to meet at centre.
- 5/6     Partners arm right (reel step)
- 7/8     Partners honour right and left.
- 9/10    Partners arm left.
- 11/12   Partners honour right and left.
  
- 13      Both dance two reel steps with kick to corners nearest presence.
- 14      Both dance four pivot spins to right.
- 15      Both dance two reel steps with kick to meet at centre.
- 16      Partners take right hands with a slight honour.
- 17      Man steps behind woman and takes her left hand high in his left, still clasping her right hand with his right.
- 18      They pivot once clockwise in this position.

- 19/20 Man turns woman under his raised left arm to face him, and they swing clockwise with crossed hands.
- 21 Both dance two reel steps backward to corners nearest presence, woman holding her skirt out and man holding his hands high.
- 22/23 Woman taps behind with right foot, hopping on left, then brings right heel behind, in front, behind left ankle, and changes weight onto right foot; then taps behind with left foot and brings left heel behind and in front of right ankle hopping on right foot, and finishes with feet together. Simultaneously man claps his hands under his right knee, hopping on left foot, then under left knee, hopping on right foot, makes a pivot turn clockwise and clasps his hands over his head.
- 24/25 Partners dance two reel steps forward to meet at centre & take R hands.
- 26/27 Woman pivots to her left while man dances eight tapping cross steps round her clockwise, still holding her hand high. (Woman's pivots are under man's arm, and she holds her skirt with her left hand.)
- 28/29 Partners honour with clasped hands, woman curtseying low and man raising his free hand, curved over his head.
- 30/32 Lead off in four side steps, and a clockwise turn, still with right hands clasped.
- 33/34 Four more side steps to finish lead off.

Note: In the last figure, when partners meet, instead of taking right hands, the man may pull off his neck-scarf and the woman catch hold of it in her right hand, and they would then hold it to finish instead of clasped hands.

### **3.4 Smooïnaghtyn Voirrey**

A couple's dance composed by Mary Corlett to the air Arrane Queeyl Nieuue. Again this dance was found in Douglas' notes alongside material relating to the publication of *Rinkaghyn Vannin* and the formation of Sleih Gyn Thie. It is again possible that this dance was composed for the competitions as part of Yn Chruinnaght Festival.

Movements:

A1

Bars 1 – 4 Partners face each other and dance 2 MRS forward to meet clasping right hands on last beat.

Bars 5 – 8 Partners make a complete turn clockwise in 2 more MRS, with R hands clasped.

B1

- Bars 1 – 2 Partners dance 1 HRS starting on R foot.  
Bars 3 – 4 Partners dance 1 HRS starting on L foot.  
Bars 5 – 8 Partners dance the balance and spin.

A2

- Bars 1 – 4 Partners dance 4 MSS to R  
Bars 5 – 8 Partners dance 4 MSS to L.

B2

- Bars 1 – 2 Partners dance the back to back in MRS, passing R shoulders.  
Bars 3 – 4 Partners dance the back to back in MRS, passing L shoulders.  
Bars 5 – 8 Partners dance the balance and spin (*this bit crossed out*).

A3

- Bars 1 – 4 Partners arm R in reel step.  
Bars 5 – 8 Partners arm L in reel step.

B3

- Bars 1 – 4 Partners dance Manx set R & L.  
Bars 5 – 8 Partners turn by the R in reel step.

A4

- Bars 1 – 4 Partners dance 2 MSS obliquely to R and 2 more back to L, finishing back to back.  
Bars 5 – 8 Each dances the Manx set, still facing in the same direction, then turns R in reel step to face partner.

B4

- Bars 1 – 2 Partner dance forward in Reel step and clap each other's hands high.  
Bars 3 – 4 Partners dance backward and clap their own hands over head.  
Bars 5 – 8 Manx waltz.

### **3.5 Daunseyn Aeglagh Beg**

Another couples dance found probably composed in the same circumstances as that above. It was composed to the air Emshyr Sterrymagh by Susan Highfield.

1. Partners dance 1 MRS back and 1 forward, L hands on hips and R hands up. Balance and Spin.

2. Boy balances R and L 4 times, both hands on hips, while girl dances round him clockwise, in reel step, arms extended.
3. Partners dance 4 MSS to R and 4 to L, facing (going in opposite directions).
4. Girl balances R and L 4 times, both hands on hips, while boy dances round her in reel step, arms extended.
5. Partners take R hands high and dance 2 HRS, R and L, then turn and change to L hands clasped high.
6. Partners dance 2 more HRS holding L hands high, and turn cc.
7. Partners arm R and L in MRS.
8. Manx Waltz.

### **3.6 Lhiggey Lhiggey**

Found within Douglas' notes (MNHL 09545 Box 7) was a sheet of paper with two dances noted on it. Neither is published and both appear to be more like children's playground games or dances. The first, Lhiggey Lhiggey shares its name with a common children's song.

#### **Lhiggey, Lhiggey**

Children form two rings, boys on outside, girls inside, and dance round in opposite directions to the first part of the tune. There is one extra girl. As the words, Guilley, guilley gow Ineen, each boy tries to catch a girl, who then becomes his partner for the rest of the round. Some object, such as a large stone or a clew of gorse named the Guiy, or Goose, and the unsuccessful player has to carry this while the rest gallop round in pairs to the first part of the tune. When partners are paired up and one is left without any, before the final gallop, all point at him and shout 'Gow yn Guiy!' (Take the goose!)

It is of the same style as the collected version of Hunt the Wren and of the dance involving a goose as noted in a letter from Douglas to Mrs Kelly in 1950 who was looking for material to perform at an upcoming children's concert. This dance had words to it that were enclosed but not found in Douglas' notes.

The game part is a sort of cross between Musical Arms and a Paul Jones dance! You have the children in couples, but with an extra boy, who carries an imitation goose and looks embarrassed. In the first half of the tune the couples gallop round in a circle with clasped hands, girls on the inside, and the extra boy puts down the goose and gallops too. Second half of the tune, couples separate, girls going round one way and boys the other, and the extra boy tries to grab him a partner. Whoever is left without one has to be the 'Dooiney Boght' for the next round and carry the 'Goose', and before they start dancing round again all the others point at him and cry 'Gow yn Guiy!' (Take the goose!).

Both dances have similarities with a Welsh dance in which the extra person wears a sheepskin and butts the dancers with his fingers as horns. This element of extra person and animal is possibly a preservation of a similar element relating the Mollag dance and others in which there must be one fool, comical character or victim of ridicule, but simplified for use by children.

### **3.7 Pancakes and Flitters**

On the same sheet of paper as Lhiggey Lhiggey (MNHL 09545 Box 7) is this dance or game. It is a variant of the English 'Oranges and Lemons' game and rhyme. However it has been included here as Douglas states that many dances were called games and this dance or game has been linked previously with the Flitter Dance.

Pancakes and Flitters.

Two children make an arch with their raised hands and the run under it in single file, chanting; Pancakes and flitters is the way of Cantailers, I owe you two shillings, I'll pay you tomorrow; Cur skillen, cur pingyn, cur argid son y Caisht, As cha ver oo dou bee oo gheddyn dty vaaish. As each one passes under the arch the two at each side whisper in turn. One is 'Skillin' (shilling), the other 'Pingyn' (pennies), and the one going through has to choose which he or she will have, and go behind his choice. The game finishes with a tug-o'war.

### **3.8 Dance in Manx Steps to Storm Ballet Music**

Evidently a relatively recently composed dance. The notes were found in Douglas' personal notes (MNHL 09545 Box 7) although what the Storm Ballet Music refers to is not yet known.

- Lead in: 4MSS to change places, partners facing; 4 back to original places, arms extended.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Fig: Partners advance 2 HRS to meet at centre, arm R & honour R & L, arm, L & honour R & L again. (12 bars)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Fig: Bar 13: 2 RSK to corners. Bar 14: 4 pivots to R. Bar 15: 2 RSK back to meet at centre. Bar 16: Partners take R hands & honour. Bar 17: Man steps behind woman and takes her L hand high in his L, still clasping her R hand with his R. Bar 18: They pivot clockwise in this position. Bars 19-20: Man turns woman to face him under his raise L arm, then drops it so that they face with hands clasped and crossed. In this position they swing clockwise.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Fig: Bar 21: Both dance 2 MRS backward. Bars 22 – 23: Partners facing, woman hops on L foot while tapping with R behind, in front and behind L ankle, then changes weight and hops on R while tapping L foot behind, in front and behind (jig step). Simultaneously man hops on L foot, clapping hands under R knee, hops on R foot clapping under L knee, then pivots to R while clapping his hands over his head. Bars 24 – 25: Both dance 2 MRS forward and meet at centre. Bars 26 – 27: Partners take R hands high, and woman pivots under man's raised arm while he dances tapping cross steps R and L on the spot. Bars 28 – 29: Partners honour low with hand clasped. Bars 30 – 34: They lead off on MSS.

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