

Bwoie Doal – 30 Years of the Manx Music Session



It may seem obvious to many of the older ‘folkies’, but with the tune books *Kiaull yn Theay 1* and *2* still providing the staple repertoire for Manx traditional musicians, it’s very possible that while our younger members will be familiar with the sketch of musicians in the beginning of book 2, they may not actually know who the characters are. The above sketch by Colin Jerry depicts ‘Bwoie Doal’, the session group responsible for the modern revival of Manx traditional music, and this Easter marks their 30 year anniversary.

Pictured clockwise from the top are David Fisher [bodhrán], Bob Carswell [flute], Phil Kelly [banjo], Colin Jerry [uilleann pipes], Cristl Jerry [harp], Simon Capelan [banjo] and Mike Boulton [guitar]. George Broderick and Brian Stowell were also founding members but were living away from the Isle of Man at the time of the sketch.

Named after Tom Kermode, a folk-singer of the late 19th century, Bwoie Doal [Blind Boy] consisted of local musicians who had previously played music from the inter-Celtic repertoire, many with the group, Celtic Tradition. After a particularly inspiring visit to North Wales over Easter 1977, some of the Manx musicians and Gaelic speakers decided to establish an exclusively Manx music session on their return. Under the umbrella name, Bwoie Doal, the session was held every Saturday night in the Central pub in Peel, also known as ‘Thie Bouyr’ [Deaf House] before moving to The Whitehouse, where a Manx

music session still exists today. The re-discovery of the 'Clague/Gill Collection' in the Manx museum provided most of the instrumental repertoire for the session group, along with Gaelic songs collected by A.W. Moore and Mona Douglas. Many of these melodies and songs were then transcribed by Colin Jerry in *Kiaull yn Theay 1* and *2* (1978 and 1979), or as they're possibly better known, the 'yellow' and 'red' (or sometimes orange!) books.

With most aspiring Manx musicians having passed through the session at some point in their lives or having learnt their repertoire from one of its original members or from the books, it could be said that the success of today's living tradition is directly attributable to the inception of Bwoie Doal in 1977. And with most of these pictured musicians still frequenting the Manx music scene (albeit looking slightly older), perhaps the younger generation should request a reunion gig!?

Chloë Woolley

[With thanks to Colin Jerry, George Broderick, Mike Boulton, David Fisher and others for their reminiscences].