

The Misadventures of Dr. Danziger in Manxland

by

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This article, one of an occasional series about musicians who were interned on the Isle of Man during World War II, relates the experiences of Dr Danziger, and amateur 'cellist, whose sojourn was different from many, often young, Jewish musicians, who were interned here, because he, and his wife, was already resident on the Island when war was declared. Regretfully, I have been unable to discover very little about his life and career before he and his wife arrived on the Island just before the outbreak of World War II, other than that he was a retired physician (facharzt).

Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage

Felix Salo* Danziger, was born in Leipzig on 12th August 1880. His wife, Else, was born in Königsberg on 14th December 1889. They arrived at Southampton in June 1937 from Bremen on the *Columbus*, and it seems likely that they were Jewish refugees escaping the Nazi regime in Germany. By 1939 they were living at 3, Dalmeny House, 77 Anson Road, London N. 7 (Islington), aged 59 and 50.

* Hebrew: derived from Solomon.

Dr. Danziger's name first appears in the Isle of Man newspapers in April 1939* at the annual concert of the Manx Amateur Orchestral Society held at St Andrew's Hall, Douglas on 28th March, when 'a new 'cellist was noted in the person of Dr Danziger'. The orchestra was conducted by Kathleen Rydings** and the programme included Quilter's *Suite of English Dances*, Grieg's *Norwegian Dance no. 2*, Dr George Tootell's *Manx Airs*,*** Walford-Davies' *Solemn Melody* and pieces by Handel and Schubert. Kathleen Rydings herself performed a violin showpiece by Wieniawski. The reviewer observed that '... the orchestra has developed in numbers and efficiency during recent years . . . now boasted double basses, trumpets, trombones and timpani.' Dr Danziger probably took part in the performance of Haydn Wood's cantata *Lochinvar* at the Music Festival concert on Saturday 27th April 1939.

* *Isle of Man Times*, 08.04.1939

** See Maurice Powell, *A Very Gifted Manx Lady*, Wibble Publishing, 2014.

*** See Maurice Powell, *Dr Tootell and The Legend of Man*, manxmusic.com. January 2022.

Molto furioso

By 1940 the situation regarding German or Austrian born residents had changed, and they soon became to be regarded as 'enemy aliens'. The *Ramsey Courier** reported Mr E. W. Fargher's question in the House of Keys on Tuesday 4th June concerning 'the internment of enemy aliens who have been living privately in the Isle of Man', apparently prompted by a 'large deputation' of his constituents from the Santon district, 'where certain enemy aliens reside . . . and are at large'. He received support from the Lieutenant Governor who pronounced in comic book style that 'the only good Huns are dead Huns',** and Mr Arthur E.

Kitto MHK, a member of the War Consultative Committee of Tynwald, put in his two penny worth by saying that ‘. . . I wouldn’t trust any enemy alien outside barbed wire’. Confusion reigned as to exactly who was ‘an enemy alien’ and who was a ‘refugee’, and the resulting brouhaha meant that Dr Danziger was unable to play in the orchestra for the 49th Manx Music Festival concert on Thursday 2nd May. The *Examiner**** had earlier demanded that ‘. . . we expect the Guild Committee to take steps to see he informed that his services will not be required . . . it would seem rather incongruous that a man of German birth should take part in the cantata *The Banner of St. George* (Elgar) under present conditions’.

* *Ramsey Courier*, 07. 06. 1940

** *Isle of Man Times*, 15.06.1940

*** *Isle of Man Examiner*, 26.04.1940

Dr Danziger and his wife had, in fact, been resident ‘for a considerable period’ at Ballavale, Santon, a property owned by Sir Mark Collett of Sulby,* and described as ‘. . . a salubrious mansion’, together with Mr and Mrs Kerchheim (to whom they may have been related), and an Austrian refugee, Dr Rose. According to anecdotal evidence presented to the House of Keys, the Danzigers ‘had been seen on the quarter to six bus from Douglas to Santon’, and they, and the others, ‘claim to be refugees from Germany . . . but they have never been before a tribunal to establish whether this is true or not’. However, before any investigation could be instigated the Danzigers ‘had gone into voluntary internment . . .’ and were ‘engaged by the Manx Government and are working at Port Erin’ as teachers amongst the female internees.

This was confirmed by the *Isle of Man Times*** which stated that the Danzigers were now ‘living within the German internment camp at Port Erin’, but acknowledged that

- a) it was not known why they went there.
- b) nor was it known what they were doing there, and
- c) it was not known if the ‘lady responsible for running the camp had been consulted before these people were imposed upon her . . .’

Reference was also made to ‘other female Germans on the Island’ working in various capacities including ‘a position in some Government institution’ (the Asylums Board).

* Sir Mark Collett JP., DL was the son of Sir Mark Wilkes Collett, Baronet, a Governor of the Bank of England. He became the High Sheriff of Kent, Alderman of the County and Chairman of the Kent Education Committee, and lived at ‘Clere’, Kemsing, Kent, with hundreds of acres, and a house in France. He purchased Ballavale in 1935, but in December that year purchased the estates of East and West Ballamanagh, Sulby, where his ancestors once resided. Sir Mark and Lady Collett were well-known benefactors, Life Members of the Manx Museum, President of the Ramsey Male Choir and President of the Society for the Preservation of Manxland. Ballavale was advertised TO LET in the *Isle of Man Times*, 01.06.1940, and again on 15.06.1940.

** *Isle of Man Times*, 08.06.1940

A question before the House of Keys the following month: ‘. . . why (are) the Germans here treated differently to what they are being treated in England?’ was prompted because the Manx people were apparently ‘angry (or more likely envious) at the privileges allowed *their*

own Germans (my italics) . . . 'A 'partial victory' was claimed on behalf of public opinion,* as 'some of our resident enemies' are now behind the barbed wire . . .' Eventually the Speaker of the House of Keys admitted that '. . . with regard to the aliens at Ballavale, I have been unable to ascertain a single fact to throw doubt on their loyalty to this country'.**

* *Isle of Man Examiner*, 14.06.1940

** *Ramsey Courier* 14.07.1940

Andante tranquillo

Dr Danziger was officially released from internment on 11th September 1940 as a 'Male Enemy Alien - Exemption from Internment – Refugee'; a tribunal decision of 12th October 1940 stated that he had no desire to be repatriated.* Elsa Danziger was released on 10th October 1940, the couple soon resumed their musical activities, as the *Examiner** reported in August following 'a concert of outstanding quality' in the Town Hall, Port St. Mary, on Thursday 22nd in aid of Noble's Hospital, given by Continental artistes' and attended by a large audience of local residents and 'campers residing in the district'. Taking part were 'continental opera star' Mrs Else Haefner-Peppler, Mrs Eva-Maria Spier, violin ** and Mr G (*sic*) Danziger, 'cello. Mrs Danziger 'took an active part in promoting the event. Local performers also contributed to a programme of music by Handel, Schumann, Beethoven, Gade, Schubert and others.

* *Isle of Man Examiner*, 23.08.1940

** A Naturalisation Certificate was issued for Eva-Maria Paula Spier, 'from Germany, resident in London', on 22nd September 1949. National Archives, Kew.

A musical recital and service took place at St. Mary's Church, Port St. Mary, on Friday 6th September. Dr J. Danziger, 'cello, took part in a programme of chamber music and songs ending with the congregation singing *Stille Nacht* in German. Further recitals at the church at the end of the month with Dr C (*sic*) Danziger and some of the artistes from earlier recitals, and in mid-October when the same performers, including Mrs Haeffner-Peppler, took part in an Evensong and recital. In November a concert featuring the Camp School Orchestra took place at Ballaqueeney (Hotel/Hydro), Port St. Mary,* with music by Bach and Corelli with Dr G (*sic*) Danziger. Later that month Dr Danziger played a *Largo* for 'cello with organ accompaniment by Birkem(n)stock at musical service at the church, November.*

* The Danzigers may have been billeted in married accommodation at the famous Ballaqueeney Hotel or one of the nearby guest houses from May 1941.

* *Isle of Man Examiner*, 13.09.1940 and 01.11.1940. Johann Adam Birkenstock (1687-1733) was a German composer from Kassel, and a foremost violinist of his day.

In 1941 the name Danziger began to appear again in the local newspapers as the achievements at the Buchan School of two, possibly daughters, of the family: Sabine and Elizabeth Danziger, were reported. Sabine* was awarded the Buchan School Royal Life Saving Society Bronze Medal and a Certificate for 'consistently thorough and painstaking work'.

* *Mona's Herald*, 29.07.19.41. Possibly Sabine Anna Sophie or Sara Danziger, born Berlin 14.08.1925. See 'Index of Jews whose German nationality was annulled by the Nazi regime between 1935-44'. Was she too old to attend

the Buchan School aged 16? On 7th July 1946 she was registered in the United Kingdom as a physiotherapist and masseuse.

In June 1942 E. Danziger won the netball shooting (open) competition at the Buchan School Sports Day,* and in September Sabine A. S. Danziger was passed the Northern Matriculation Board's School Certificate Examination.

* *Isle of Man Examiner*, 19.06.1942

In September 1943, Sabine was awarded the Higher Certificate in German Main, French Main and First Aid. Elizabeth Danziger took part in 'a demonstration of Eurythmics at St. Ninian's Hall in September 1945, and in November that year she was presented with the Higher School Certificate. Elizabeth Danziger was awarded the Royal Life Saving Society Bronze Medal in July 1946, and in September that year she received a Letter of Success in English, French and German. Before the end of the years Douglas Choral Union began rehearsing for their production of *The Duchess of Danzig* in January 1947.

Finale

Dr Danziger and his wife were back in Islington, London, between 1949 - 51. Else Danziger - described on a passenger list as a 'housewife of Islington - may have been on a holiday to Canada or American in November 1950, returning from New York to Southampton on the *Queen Elizabeth*. Dr Danziger died on 24th August 1953, and Else - described as a widow and teacher of 11, Hill Road, London, W. 8 - travelled to Canada or America again in 1956, returning 'tourist class' on the *Ivernia* via New York and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Perhaps one, or both, of the daughters emigrated to Canada after World War II?

There is much more to learn about Dr Danziger and his family than can be gleaned from the local newspapers and a few official documents. Perhaps a reader of this modest piece will be able to fill in the gaps?

Andreas, July 2022