

Summer Entertainment on the Isle of Man

1961-65

A fond farewell to Ivy and Ronnie

and the end of an era

by

Maurice Powell

1961

'If the fifties were in black and white, then the sixties were in technicolour'.

The year 1961 marked the beginning of the decade when Britain truly changed. Young people in the sixties were significantly different to those of a decade earlier. A generation of young men were free from conscription for the first time since 1947. Music became a major factor in defining the age along with the mini skirt, the use of recreational drugs and young peoples' pursuit of peace and freedom. People increasingly owned colour televisions, and transistor radios were carried around in the streets as an essential accessory for the young. In 1963 the huge political scandal known as the Profumo affair undermined faith in politicians forever. The decade also witnessed the dawn of feminism, the acceptance of the contraceptive pill and, in July 1967, the Sexual Offences Act, which legalised consensual homosexual acts in private between men over the age of twenty-one, was passed.

On the Isle of Man, it was the decade that would witness the demise and demolition of the Palace Coliseum, the Derby Castle, the Crescent Pavilion and the Onchan Head Pavilion, the result of a fire. The Palais de Danse - previously a warehouse for Woolworths following a serious fire, and subsequently a market hall - was put up for auction by the Palace & Derby Castle Company and bought by the Maypole Dairy. Despite an extensive makeover, Douglas Holiday Camp, too, continued its long decline, hastened by increasing competition from ever more attractive and inexpensive family package and foreign holidays.

1961 in a nutshell

The television comedy spy caper *The Avengers* was first screened in January; in February, the Beatles appeared at Liverpool's Cavern Club for the first time under that name; The E-type Jaguar was launched in April, and in May, Spurs won the 'double' (League and FA cups). Angela Mortimer beat Christine Truman at the Wimbledon Ladies' Final in July; Acker Bilk released *Stranger on the Shore* in October; *Songs of Praise* was first broadcast by the BBC; *Private Eye* magazine was first published; birth control pills first become available on the NHS in November; Ian Fleming's *Thunderball* was published, and John le Carre's first novel *Call for the Dead* appeared and introduced his iconic character, the spy George Smiley. Neil 'Midsomer Murders' Dudgeon was born in January; the British conductor Sir Thomas Beecham died in March; impressionist Rory Bremner and actor Nicholas 'Rodney' Lyndhurst were born in April. *Carry on Regardless*, and, in complete contrast, the spooky ghost story based on Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Innocents*, were released; Tony Hancock

starred in the more highly regarded of his two films, *The Rebel*, although I believe the 1963 *The Punch and Judy Man* to be far more entertaining, and Sid James and Adam Faith released *What a Whopper* . . . no, I hadn't heard of it either. Mick Jagger and Keith Richards met on Dartford railway station and discovered they both liked Rock 'n' Roll . . . what if one or other of them had missed the train! The concert pianist Dame Myra Hess - beloved because of her brave recitals in war-torn London - gave her last public performance at the Royal Festival Hall; the London production of *The Sound of Music* began its run of 2,385 performances and . . . oh, yes . . . Cliff Richard starred in *The Young Ones*, a definite improvement on *Expresso Bongo* (although that wasn't difficult), during which he sings *Living Doll*. With the joys of *Summer Holiday* yet to come, this high-grossing, light-hearted drivel of the generation gap was said to be the third most popular film of the period after *The Guns of Navarone* and *Dr. No*.

The Island bade farewell to two stars, both long associated with the island. George Formby died from a heart attack on 6th March after a decade of increasing ill health and bouts of depression. In truth, his popularity had begun to wane after World War II, although he was always accorded a warm welcome by Manx audiences and retained his ability to draw large enthusiastic summer crowds in Douglas. Many still remembered his first visit to Douglas in 1935 during the making of the TT inspired comedy *No Limit* - his third major film, if you discount *By the Shortest of Heads* of 1915 - but few will have recalled that his father, George 'Coughing better tonight' Formby Snr, had appeared at the Palace before World War I. George's mother, Eliza Booth, wife of George Formby Snr, outlived him by twenty years and died in 1981 at the age of 102. In October, another link with the heyday of entertainment on the Island, 'the diminutive laugh-raiser' Harry Vardon, the partner and associate of Manxland's premier comic Harry Korris between the wars, died in Pendlebury, Manchester.

The latest Census figures showed an 'alarming drop in population' from just under 54,499 to 48,150* and revealed a disturbing trend. The population of Douglas had fallen by 20,000 in ten years, and Island-wide there were 4,032 fewer males in the population. The balance between older and younger people had tipped in favour of the elderly, and many families had decided to re-settle 'across the water', or even further afield, worn down by the 'chronic Winter unemployment situation' which, despite work schemes that only partially reduced the dole queues, and a five-year development plan promoted by Lieutenant Governor Garvey costing upwards of £5,000,000, seemed intractable. The idea of attracting retirees to the Island received a mixed reception mainly because of the imbalance between the young and old highlighted above. Nevertheless, it was believed that the Island could reach a population of 75,000 without being overcrowded!

* The population of the Island was 41,000 in 1841 and had increased only to 50,000 over the ensuing one hundred and twenty years.

The prospect of a casino in Douglas was roundly denounced at a Diocesan Conference by the Archdeacon who, amid dire predictions of suicides among gamblers 'and the rise of gambling sharks and worse', believed 'thugs, prostitutes and crooks' would be attracted to the Island. It was stated that in the country districts 85% of the population* were opposed to a casino, whereas 63% of 'townies' (who relied more on the tourist trade) were in favour. There would be no decision before 1962.

* Whether this was 85% of the church-going population, or the population in general, is not clear.

Border Television transmissions from the new 336-metre-tall transmitter at Caldbeck in Cumbria began on 1st September and was welcomed by viewers in many parts of the Island who would now be able to enjoy *Saturday Night at the London Palladium*, *Emergency Ward 10* and *Coronation Street*.

Ready and waiting

There were changes to the Island's travel and holiday facilities which would affect the experience of visitors to a greater or lesser extent as the Island once again waited in anticipation of the annual influx of summer holiday makers. The Motor Coach (charabanc) trade came under review and several small companies with just two or three vehicles merged under new regulations overseen by an independent licensing body. In fact, the number of licensed coaches had fallen from one hundred and sixty-four to one hundred and thirteen since 1946, and many were more than ten years old. It was agreed that more modern coaches holding more passengers in greater comfort were needed.

The Steam Packet Company announced that an order for a new car ferry with the capacity to hold sixty to seventy vehicles had been placed and was scheduled to be in service in time for the 1962 season. It would no longer be necessary for cars to be transported as deck cargo and be craned on and off at the sea terminals. The new vessel would also be the first in the fleet's history to have the benefit of anti-roll stabilisers.

One of Douglas' most recognisable buildings, and one that disembarking visitors could not fail to notice as they tramped along the landing pier with their luggage in one hand and a child or two in the other, was the arresting Victoria Pier Arcade with its ornate clock tower. This iconic building was scheduled to be demolished and replaced with a new terminal building, which would consign open-air queuing to the past.

'Nothing short of a tragedy'

More controversially, the Fleetwood - Douglas steamer service was scheduled to end permanently after eighty-five years, a particular loss to day trippers and holiday makers from Lancashire. The British Transport Commission maintained that the closure of the Fleetwood dock was inevitable as it was 'in a bad state', but it was thought that many thousands of visitors would choose not to travel via Liverpool as this would entail a longer train journey and an extra hour at sea. Just how serious a blow to the tourist industry the closure of Fleetwood would be would remain to be seen. In an effort to mitigate against the demise of such a popular sea route, it was suggested the air services from Blackpool could be increased, and not for the first time it was proposed that a new airport in the north of the Island was much to be desired as Ronaldsway was not usable in misty conditions.

There was much to enjoy at the smaller venues and hotels that season with many old favourites still going strong. At the Gaiety Theatre the *Happy Holiday Show* with Stella Hartley opened on 12th June with a cast of sixteen led by clownish comedian Jay Martel and funny men brothers Dave and Joe O'Duffy. Husband and wife cabaret-style piano and vocal duettists Martin Gluth and Helen James, both expert costumiers famous for their 'period' costumes

and stylish evening wear, were a huge draw, together with accordionists The Two Excelsiors; pianists Leslie Clarke and Pat Barrasford, and the Six Lovely Gaiety Girls completed the talented line-up. From 26th June there were two shows each evening at 6.15 and 8.30, both featuring Stella's on-stage party games.

The Crescent Pavilion presented the *Crescent Follies* from 25th June. Described as 'A bright Revue', it was a re-creation of a traditional seaside Pierrot Show, and featured a cast of eight: Horace Mashford (music hall revivalist, revue, vaudeville and pantomime light entertainer); cockney comedian Eddie 'a laugh a minute' Cliff; fiddling and tumbling pantomime stars Jack le White and Pauline Simone; conjurors, ventriloquists and cartoonists George and Irene Rissen, back for a fourth season; singer, impressionist and pianist Iris Blair from Edinburgh, and pianist Mary Miller, the *repetiteur* for many stars, but seldom seen in her own right.

There was *Fun in the Sun* at Douglas Head, a 'bright family show' which could be seen twice daily at 11.00am and 3.00pm. La Velma headed the cast with comic Johnny Dawes, yodeller George van Dusen and comedienne Doris College. There were songs at the piano with Marie Jackson; accordion wizardry from Trixie Dean; impressions from Suzanne Parsons and stylish vocal numbers from Eric Cochran.

Jack Stone and his band presided over the morning 'jive' sessions from Mondays to Fridays at Douglas Holiday Camp, described by one observer as 'a laborious rough and tumble'. However, commented another perceptively, the 'modernists' of today are the 'old timers' of tomorrow; times change, and just as waltzes and polkas made way for the jazz inspired dance crazes of the 1920s, 'jiving' may already be on the wane.

Harry Wood* and his orchestra - 'Easy to listen to, or dance to, whatever your mood' - played for dancing at Rushen Abbey Gardens during the afternoons, and for the Celebrity Concerts on Sundays at 3.00 and 8.00pm. From July they could also be heard at 10.30 each morning.

* Not to be confused with Harry Wood, 'Manxland's King of Music', the overall musical director of the Palace & Derby Castle Company from before World War I until 1938, and the elder brother of the composer Haydn Wood.

Lewis Gale provided the summer entertainment in Ramsey's Mooragh Park with his show *Aces of Variety* starring spellbinding magician and compere Cyril 'Gus' Alligan, known as 'the saucy sorcerer'.

Many hotels provided entertainment for their guests including the Wheatsheaf, which featured the Irish lass from County Clare, Fay O'Keefe, at the piano twice daily; the Douglas Head Hotel boasted musical entertainment and sing-songs night and day; 'all your old friends are back' announced the Prospect Hotel, Prospect Hill, Douglas, and entertainment provided by Eddie Humphries and Tommy Hunter, piano and drums, with jovial compere Les Bean, and Howard Rudd entertained at the piano at the Falcon Cliff Hotel.

The Bradda Glen Ballroom, Port Erin, featured The Sapphires with their 'Swing and Sway' sessions; the Vicki Levis Band and the Falcons Rhythm Group played modern dance music at the Marine Hall, Peel, and for dextrous youngsters in Douglas and Peel who were too young to 'Rock 'n' Roll' there were daily Yo-Yo competitions.

In fact, various venues in Peel, Ramsey and Laxey promoted 'jive sessions' during the season, but 'Jive Fans' at the Villa Marina were disappointed when a 'Jive Ban' was introduced in the Royal Hall even though younger dancers had been allowed to 'jive' near the stage providing they did not get in the way of ordinary ballroom dancers the previous season. The morning 'jive' sessions were 'all very well' but lacked the atmosphere of the evening dances, it was thought, but by whom, one wonders; others believed that a holiday resort should cater for all . . . 'including the younger folk'. However, the third annual Modern Dance Festival, scheduled to take place at the Palace Ballroom, would feature an 'Open Jive Competition' for those over sixteen years of age.

As for 'lacking in atmosphere', many visitors were shocked at the state that the Derby Castle had fallen into and were disheartened by rumours that it was to become an amusement arcade. 'Its day has passed', some believed; 'the cinema and television are reducing the demand for live theatre'. The Pavilion Theatre, Onchan Head, (the home of Karma) had been destroyed by fire the previous season and would not to be replaced, as, indeed, would any of the other surviving wooden entertainment venues that once proliferated around the island.

At the 'flicks'

The story of the Island's cinemas is worthy of investigation but is beyond the scope of this series of articles. Here follows a highly selective list of the films shown during 1961:

The Crescent Cinema* screened the 'Carry On-esque' romp *Dentist on the Job* starring Bob Monkhouse, Shirley Eaton, Kenneth Connor, and Charles Hawtree who made a personal appearance at the cinema.

* Owned by the Palace & Derby Castle Company and situated on the Central Promenade. The original Crescent Picture House was part of the Pierrot Village complex and opened in 1923. The larger Crescent Cinema opened next door in 1930 (presumably the original smaller cinema was then demolished). It closed in the early 1970s as a cinema and became a wax works exhibition and indoor entertainment venue. Around 2000 it became a gym and health centre known as the Crescent Leisure Centre and was ultimately demolished and developed into apartments, although the white tiled 'classical' façade was retained.

The 'so-so' romantic drama *The World of Suzy Wong* was shown at the Regal Cinema* starring earnest and sincere William Holden and delightful screen-stealer Nancy Kwan.

* The 'New Regal Cinema' was situated on the site of the earlier Grand Theatre (designed by Frank Matcham, 1882-88) in Victoria Street. Films were shown there from the early 1900s and around 1909 it became the Grand Picturedrome. It was re-developed and re-opened in 1934-5 as the New Regal Cinema and a Compton three manual cinema organ was installed. Acquired by the Palace & Derby Castle Company in the 1960s, it closed and was demolished in 1983 and replaced by Celtic House.

The Strand Cinema, Douglas,* showed *No Limit!* the commercial success that made George Formby's name, which had been shown on the Island annually around the time of the TT festival for decades. Regarded by many Formby 'buffs' as his best and funniest film, it is worth watching for on location views of the Isle of Man before World War II, if for little else.

* The Strand was opened in 1913 by the same company that later built the Picture House (see below) and became part of the Palace & Derby Castle Company during World War II. It finally closed in the 1960s when it became an amusement arcade for a short time before re-opening as a cinema in 1968; it finally closed as a

cinema in 1988 and as an amusement arcade in 1990. It was then re-developed as a Littlewoods store, complete with its Italianate façade, balconies and minaret style towers.

The high-class, predicably steamy, 'soap opera' sequel to Grace Metalious' 1957 *Peyton Place*, *Return to Peyton Place* was shown at the Picture House.*

* Originally built in 1921, Cinema House, with its striking half-timbered façade, screened the first 'talkie' in 1929. A modern Compton three manual cinema organ was installed in 1933. Cinemascope arrived in 1955; after renovation it re-opened with *My Fair Lady* in 1965. During the 1980s the cinema was open only from Easter to September, and finally closed in 1988. A replica of the original façade now marks the entrance to the *Superdrug* store, one shop away from its original site.

The Strand Cinema Port Erin* screened *G.I. Blues* with a clean-cut Elvis Presley as the singing member of a tank crew - sans Rock 'n' Roll gyrations - and exuberant club dancer Juliet Prowse, and *Oklahoma*, which despite the title, was mostly filmed in *Arizona*.

* Opened in 1935 and acquired by the Palace & Derby Castle Company in the 1940s, the Strand Cinema closed in 1971 and was converted into shops and a motor museum for a time

The popular ritual of attending the open-air Sunday services at Kirk Braddan Church resumed on 11th June at 10.45am and continued to attract large crowds throughout the season as it had done for decades.

Douglas Carnival Week - always a colourful and spectacular event – was scheduled to take place between 21-24 August, and would feature the Band of the Irish Guards, the Bon Accord Ladies Pipe Band, a Children's Festival in the Palace Gardens, a Grand Parade, and a Carnival Ball and fireworks at the Villa Marina.

The Villa Marina

'Ivy and Phil are a great combination at the Villa'

Ivy Benson and her All-Girl Band returned for a seventh successive season directly from their latest tour of Germany on Whit Saturday, 29th May, and resumed their position as Douglas' popular summer entertainment band,* playing for dancing in the Royal Hall until Phil Moss returned to Douglas on 19th June, and for concerts in the Gardens most afternoons,* for the talent competitions* and for the Bathing Beauty Contests for the title 'Queen of Man'. Ivy introduced her new guitar strumming vocalist, twenty-year-old Irene Stocker,* whom she had spotted on television's *Go Man Go*, and brought into her team of vocal soloists to appeal specifically to Rock 'n' Roll fans. Exuberant Scottish Girl piper Pat Gentles – 'a wee drap o' Scotch' - returned for the season together with new pianist Heather Nicholls.* The new 'Jive' sessions in the Royal Hall at 11.00 in the mornings featured Ivy Benson;* Ivy's girls also played at the first Open-Air Jive Session held at King George V Park on 18th July which lasted from 8.30 until 11.30pm.

* See *Holiday News* 12.08.1961 for a photograph of Ivy Benson's trumpet and trombones sections, and *Holiday News* 10.06.1961 for a photograph of the five-strong saxophone section.

* See HN 22.07.1961 for a view of an afternoon concert in the Villa Gardens.

* See HN 29.07.1961 for a photograph of Ivy Benson and a young competitor.

* See HN 10.06.1961 for a photograph of Irene Stocker.

* See IoMDT 07.03.1961 and HN 01.07.1961 for a photograph of Heather Nicholls.

* **See** HN 15-06-1961 for a photograph of Ivy Benson at a 'jive' session.

Billy Duncan gave recitals every morning on his Hammond organ,* and for the very young, Auntie Rose and Uncle Roy presented entertainments in the Gardens at Kiddies Corner and the Children's Theatre.

* See *Holiday News* 17.06.1961 for a photograph of this popular and entertaining organist.

Phil Moss returned to the Royal Hall for the season on Monday 19th June with vocalist and entertainer Mike Shaun, a star of stage, radio and television, the attractive brunette Toni Sharpe, Muriel Todd, piano, and vocalist Ray Peters. Thursday evenings were designated Special Old Time Dance nights.

The first Sunday Celebrity Concert on 11th June starred Mike and Bernie Winters, foremost comedians and accomplished musicians on the clarinet and drums. Theirs was essentially an old-fashioned knockabout, straight man and 'idiot' act, one immaculately dressed, the other wearing clothes several sizes too large. They had split up several times during the 1950s; their television appearances as the resident comics on *Six-Five Special* in 1955 had not been well received, and they had resumed as a double act only the previous year. They disagreed on just about everything, and their inevitable final split came in 1978.

The following Sunday 18th June starred Harriott and Evans, the cabaret style Jamaican vocal duo, immaculately attired in white ties and tails in the Layton and Johnson mould. They were joined by charming, debonaire hairdresser-turned-magician, inventor and mind reader Al Koran, the 'gentleman' mentalist, and the veteran of twenty-five Royal Command performances, who began his career as a street performer called 'Pins' Draper in London's Petticoat Lane, and later performed for Winston Churchill, Princess Grace of Monaco and our own Royal Family. Ivy Benson provided the musical interludes.

The guest celebrities on Sunday 25th June were Scotland's popular, personable and entertaining vocal duo Robin Hall and Jimmy Macgregor,* currently touring Scotland and appearing at Llandudno, and regularly seen on BBC's *Tonight* with their comedy 'hit' song *Football Crazy*, which brought them fame and piles of fan mail. This was their first visit to the Island, and after their appearance, they hired a car, found a quiet hotel and enjoyed the Manx countryside and the fresh air for a week before returning to Llandudno for the rest of the season. Their reception was warm before a large audience.

* See *Holiday News* 17.06.1961 for a photograph of the duo.

The Battle of the Bombshells

A plethora of Bombshells leading to smouldering looks at dawn? Thankfully not, but two Blonde Bombshells – or three if one counts Anne Shelton, who was certainly blonde, and a larger-than-life character with a far better voice than the other two - appearing at the same venue in the same month? A bombshell too many, Yana, appeared at the Sunday Concert on 2nd July.

'Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight'

Chris Barber and his trad-jazz band received a terrific welcome on Sunday 16th July, and 'really made the old Villa swing'. A popular band leader and trombonist in the Acker Bilk and Kenny Ball mould, he was accompanied by resident Blues singer - and wife since 1959 - Otilie Patterson. The band opened with their signature tune, *Bourbon Street Parade* and other classics followed including *Tiger Rag*, Blues and New Orleans numbers. Trumpet, clarinet and banjo solos were added to the mix and the event was praised by one correspondent as '... the finest Sunday evening concert Douglas has ever experienced!'

'Hold on to your hats, boys' warned the advance advertising for Diana Dors' appearance on Sunday 23rd July, although by the 1960s the actress and singer *à la* Marilyn Monroe had discarded her earlier *risqué* sex symbol and modelling *persona* and reinvented herself as a cabaret-style entertainer and singer. Hers was a career of peaks and troughs spent partly in the UK and partly in America, but her LP *Swinging Dors* released in 1960 was highly regarded, and she proved to be a surprisingly good actress. She was supported by husband Dickie Dawson, and by all accounts the 'show went over with a bang'.

Anne Shelton, Britain's Queen of Song, with 'a silky contralto voice of pure magic', was the celebrity star on Sunday 30th July. 'A voice of the forties', she had been an inspirational Forces favourite during World War II, as popular as Vera Lynn, and with arguably a better voice. The great Glen Miller considered that she possessed the ideal voice for his band* and she appeared with him and Bing Crosby. The veteran of several Royal Variety Performances, her recording of wartime favourite *Lili Marlene* sold a million copies and became her signature song, although her biggest post-war 'hit' was the 1956 marching song *Lay Down Your Arms*. She could certainly 'deliver' a song or ballad, and her current 'hit' *Sailor* was resoundingly received. Her career might have faded during the Rock 'n' Roll era, but she proved to be resilient and went on to appear in many charity and forces reunion shows, her voice as good as ever well into the 1980s when she toured with the New Squadronaires.

* Glen Miller had invited her to join him on his fatal flight to Paris in December 1944, but she declined for contractual reasons.

One of Britain's top entertainers, Glasgow-born 'Londoner', Lonnie 'Fabulous is the word' Donegan, billed as 'The Irish Hill-Billy' in America, was the immensely popular celebrity on Sunday 6th August. Formerly a banjo player with Chris Barber, he shot to stardom in the 1950s with *The Rock Island Line* and was thereafter associated with the birth of 'skiffle' in the UK, where three guitar chords, a tea chest bass, and a washboard and thimbles became his trademark and assured him a huge following. A string of 'hits' ensued and, great showman that he was, he became a top of the bill variety entertainer, although the 'fad' for 'skiffle' was short-lived.

Not all acts had the staying power and sheer 'pizzazz' of Lonnie Donegan. On Sunday 13th August the Allison's, Everly Brothers look-alikes and 'one hit wonders', were top of the bill. Bob and John, a clean cut, guitar playing British pop duo, represented Great Britain in the 1961 Eurovision Song Contest with *Are You Sure* and came second. The song became a million selling 'hit', a British number one and earned them a golden disc. In 1963, following a couple

of minor follow-up records, the duo disbanded but were briefly reunited in the 1990s to enjoy some success on the 'oldies circuit'.

Television's 'personality quiz master' Hughie Green entertained the crowds on Sunday 20th August;* on 3rd September the guest celebrity was Michael Holliday. The final of the Bathing Beauty Contests took place on 6th September.

* See Holiday News 12.08.1961 for a photograph.

Ivy Benson and her All-Girl Band took over in the Royal Hall and continued with the afternoon concerts in the Gardens. Within a few days they would be off to sunny Spain and engagements in Madrid and Barcelona during the winter months followed by tours in Southern Ireland and Germany. There was even talk of playing in Moscow in 1962.

The Palace Ballroom and Coliseum

Ronnie Aldrich and the Squadronaires - 'the Islands' favourites' - returned to the Palace Ballroom on 19th June for their 10th season, together with the irrepressible Peter Morton, who had been 'polishing up some surprise comedy items' for the new season, vocalist Joan Baxter, who would introduce an array of new low-cut gowns, vocalist Bobby Burns, saxophonist Cliff Townsend, and the Squadcats. Ronnie told a reporter that in between dance sessions he intended to take up dinghy sailing.

Every morning in the ballroom 'the girl with sax appeal', Betty Smith - Britain's First Lady of the Sax and vocalist - and her quintet of saxophone, trombone, guitar, bass and drums, played for dancing at 10.45. She had played with Blanche Coleman's all-girl wartime band and with Ivy Benson and toured with Tony Hancock and Jimmy Edwards as a trail-blazing singer-sax player, one of the 'coolest tenor saxes in Britain'. Her own band had been formed in the mid-fifties but disbanded in 1964, after which she continued with a solo career often with trumpeter Kenny Baker. In America she had appeared with Bill Haley, became the resident band on the *SS Franconia* and later toured in Australia and New Zealand.

Musical selections and Personality Competitions with cash prizes were the order of the day every afternoon in the Gardens when Peter Morton presented 'Music for Everyone' with the Squadronettes.

'Action, beauty and lavish costumes . . . the fastest show in Douglas'.

The summer spectacular at the Palace Coliseum began on 1st July. Entitled *Carnival on Ice*, it starred the World Olympic ballerina and figure skater Marion Davies* together with Norman Evans and his *Over the Garden Wall* sketch on ice and vocalist Dora Donalde. The full supporting cast included dance comedy duo Michael Garvey and Anne Wootton, Jimmy and Mary Peacock, 'adagio' dancers, Ravel the Continental an ice clown, 'personality girl and ice soubrette Bonny Downs (who always went over with a bang'), Sheik Ben Ali, an Indian ice magician whose famous coin and paper bag trick was later appropriated by Morecambe and Wise, plus the Glamour Icers and the Ice Squires. Eighteen tonnes of equipment was required for the show's amazing effects, including two huge refrigerators for making four tonnes of ice for the Ice Fantasy *Beneath the Coral Sea*.

* Following in the footsteps of Norway's Sonje Henie, she was third in the British Olympic Figure Skating Championships in 1945, turned professional in 1948, and starred in the famous *Ice Follies*.

Ronnie Hilton, Yorkshire born-and-bred-and-proud-of-it, was the celebrity vocalist on Sunday 2nd July. He had nine Top Twenty 'hits' between 1954-57 including, in 1956, his biggest chart success *No other Love*, from the little-known Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Me and Julie*. He enjoyed further chart success in the 1960s in the '70s presented Radio 2's *Sounds of the Fifties*. The following Sunday, 9th July, the popular Welsh baritone Ivor Emmanuel entertained the audience with his rich, sonorous voice. Well known through his radio and television appearances, he had appeared in the first televised Royal Variety Performance the previous year, and in 1964, made his only film appearance in *Zulu*, when he assisted Michael Caine in defeating Cetewayo's *impi* at Rourke's Drift by leading the defending British soldiers in *Men of Harlech* - although some film-goers probably wished that the plucky garrison might have been too parched to sing so that they could have enjoyed more of the fine Zulu chanting.

Scotland's 'Mr Show Business', Jimmy Logan, actor, pantomime Dame, film star, veteran of nine Royal Variety Performances, and the only top Scottish comedian to be really popular south of the border, kept a lively audience entertained on Sunday 16th July. The following Sunday it was the turn of Glasgow-born Don Arrol, barely remembered today as a stand-up comedian and singer, and, for one year, the compere of ITV's Sunday Night at the London Palladium. He went on to compere *The Black and White Minstrel Show*. 'Scotch Weeks' ended on Wednesday 26th July with a Great Highland Ball featuring the Edinburgh Pipe Band, the Squadronaires and Betty Smith and her quintet.

'You lucky people'

The first compere of Sunday Night at the London Palladium, where during a World War II blackout he famously ad-libbed for two hours to keep an anxious audience calm and amused, Tommy Trinder, the master of the ad-lib, with his long face, prominent chin and trademark trilby, was the celebrity star on Sunday 30th July.

On Sunday August 13th The Anne Shelton Show came to town supported by the Dallas Boys,* a five-piece vocal group popular throughout the 1950s and '60s, and considered by some to be Britain's first 'boy band'. Although considered to be 'old-fashioned' by the mid-'60s, at the zenith of their popularity they had a five thousand strong fan club, and invariably performed 'live' before a TV audience of millions in perfectly tuned close harmony. A recording of the show was later broadcast on Radio Luxemburg and featured Tommy Trinder and the Dallas Boys.

* The Dallas Boys were household names through their appearances on *Six-Five Special*, Britain's first teenage musically orientated television programme, and *Oh Boy*, which helped launch the careers of Cliff Richard, Marty Wilde and Billy Fury.

Tartan clad Andy Stewart* was the star of the concert on Sunday 20th August. The compere of television's *The White Heather Club*, whose homely, patter - or should one say 'blather' - owed much to the music hall legacy of Sir Harry Lauder, had scored an unlikely 'hit' in 1960 with *Donald, Where's Your Trousers*, and trumped this success in 1961 with *A Scottish Soldier*, which remained in the UK Singles Chart for an astonishing thirty-six weeks.*

* See *Holiday News* 12.08.1961 for photograph.

* The song was taken from Rossini's opera *Guillaume Tell*.

Billy Raymond, enjoying his second summer season just across the water in Blackpool, topped the bill on Sunday 3rd September together with top barber-shop quartet the Iowa Four. As the former Paisley Abbey choirboy known as 'Scotland's Wonder Boy Soprano', he became a popular singer in the 1950s with guest appearances on *Six-Five Special*. By the 1960s he had become a genial and popular television compere whose big break came in 1961 as the youngest ever host of the popular ITV show *Spot the Tune*. The previous year he had been *the* compere of the touring show which starred Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent during which Cochran was killed in a car accident.

The final week of Carnival on Ice began on 9th September, and at the same time Douglas bade a fond farewell to Ronnie Aldrich and the Squads for the season.

The Derby Castle and Opera House

The return 'of this most popular entertainment', All-star Free Style Wrestling commenced on 12th June. The Falcons appeared twice for an audience of pensioners from Birmingham who enjoyed their act, before they transferred to the Marina Hall, Peel, for the summer. Karma returned for the season on 25th June.

Review of the season

The air and ferry passenger returns for the season suggested that there was room for optimism. Airport passenger numbers for the period May-August were 117,067 up on 1960; the Isle of Man Harbour Board passenger returns for the same period were also up, by 17,828; only the arrivals at the Queen's Pier, Ramsey were disappointing and showed a decrease of 1,600 over the previous summer season. With the September figures to come, the overall number of visitors to the Island was published at 475,299.

Humphrey P. Whitehead of *Bride** struck an alarming note by introducing some sobering statistics into the end of season debate. In 1958, he maintained, just under 447,500 visitors had holidayed on the Island, and in 1960 there had been just under 472,000 arrivals, the lowest, he suggested, since 1926! When comparing these figures with the 1955 season with 584,528 visitors, and 1913 with 634,52, he saw 'a catastrophic drop' in visitor numbers. 'We are being stupidly complacent', he warned; '. . . the number of visitors should have increased by 20% over the past twenty years, but instead, they had reduced by 25% . . . something', he concluded, 'is very wrong . . .'

* *Ramsey Courier* 29.09.1961.

Some holiday makers believed that the stock of hotel and boarding house accommodation - rooms, communal rooms and bathrooms - should be upgraded and refreshed. 'The Island is doomed as a resort, and deservedly so', wrote one correspondent, unless the tourist industry realised that the days of 'grubby table linen, chipped plates, cracked cups and proprietary sauce bottles' are over. There were the familiar annual requests for covered indoor

entertainment especially during the afternoons, and covered swimming pools for Douglas and Ramsey.

When the verdict was delivered, the consensus was that it had been 'a fair season', with May and June showing increased numbers of holiday makers, an inexplicable falling off in July, but a satisfactory September. A letter from a late season visitor cited in *Ramsey Courier's* Notes and Comments feature in October reported encouragingly that travelling to and from the Island at the end of September had been a pleasure, with plenty of passenger accommodation available, uncrowded decks to walk around, good food reasonably priced, and courteous crew and staff. The editor countered that this experience was in complete contrast to some visitors' experiences during the height of the season, particularly at weekends. In short, Douglas may not have been in full swing throughout the season, but Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings also experienced fewer crowds, and only a slight increase in late season visitors. With a refreshing touch of realism, another commentator warned: 'The holiday business is increasingly a highly skilled and competitive one . . . we cannot continue to sit on our posteriors and hope for the best'.

1962

1962 in a nutshell

The ground breaking television 'cop' drama Z-Cars was first aired in January; in February, the first colour supplement appeared in the *Sunday Times*; ballet icons Rudolf Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn danced together for the first time in *Giselle*; Panda crossings were first introduced in April; trolleybuses were taken out of service in May; that month the new Coventry Cathedral was consecrated; the Beatles made their first recordings at the Abbey Road studios, and later that year, played their first 'live' engagement; in July, the Rolling Stones made their debut at the Marquee Club, Oxford Street, London; in September Ford launched the Cortina; the first James Bond film *Dr No* was released in October; David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* was released that year; the first phases of the M5 and M6 motorways were completed; Len Deighton's *The Ipcress File* and Ian Fleming's *The Spy Who Loved Me* were published; the BBC comedy *Steptoe and Son* and ITV's *The Saint* were first aired; comedian Jack Dee was born in September; Samantha 'Miss Moneypenny' Bond was born, and the composer John Ireland died.

'As the capital of the Isle of Man, Douglas certainly lives up to its name!'

Holiday News in June extolled the Island's ' . . . distinctive charm and a myriad of attractions', and highlighted Douglas as 'a bright and robust holiday resort bubbling with life and vigour with something to suit all tastes . . . whether 'young, middle-aged or old, it's got something for everyone'.

On Friday 18th May the Island welcomed the Steam Packet's first car ferry, the *Manx Maid II*, with the capacity for ninety cars, prior to her sea trials; she returned the following day having exceeded her predicted speed of 21 knots. The fleet was now comprised of eight passenger vessels and three cargo vessels.

An objection from the Home Office that 'such stations would be incompatible with international obligations undertaken by H. M. Government', ensured that Manx Radio's plans were set back. The main hurdle being that Manx Radio broadcasts would be picked up in UK. Despite the Wireless Telegraphy Bill having been passed in Tynwald authorising Manx Radio to operate on a commercial basis, Royal Assent was not forthcoming, and the Nation's Station was only able to broadcast within the Isle of Man.

The view from the back row

The season's top films included *West Side Story* at the Crescent Cinema, which, with ten Academy Awards, was a great film of a great musical with a superb musical score by Leonard Bernstein. *The Naked and the Dead*, a World War II drama of the triumph of the human spirit over human frailty, was screened at the Regal Cinema in June, and at the Royalty Cinema, *Only Two Can Play*, during which frustrated librarian Peter Sellers dithers between his glamorous would-be girlfriend and his long-suffering wife, but ultimately settles for the latter and takes a job as a mobile librarian. *The Guns of Navarone* were spectacularly destroyed at the Strand Cinema; Billy Fury decided to *Play it Cool* at the Royalty; Alan Bates indulged in *A Kind of Loving* at the Royalty; at the Regal Anthony Quinn as *Barabbas*, 'the man who could not die', eventually perished along with the Apostle Peter and other Christians in Rome; Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Flower Drum Song* showed at the Strand, Port Erin, and proved to be enjoyable despite the lack of 'witty dialogue, outstanding songs and vigorous choreography' according to one American reviewer; and finally, 'I am Spartacus' cried the slave Ludicrous, a call immediately taken up by all the slaves in *Spartacus* at the Strand, Douglas.

Villa Marina

Ivy Benson* and her twenty-strong All-Girl Band returned to Douglas in early June, sporting suntans gained in Madrid and Majorca the previous month where they took part in two street carnivals. They began the season in the Ballroom at 7.30 each evening until 18th June when Nat Temple and his band took over for the season. Ivy was firmly established in the Gardens at 2.30 each afternoon by the time the Bathing Beauty Contests started on 14th June. There were Twist and Jive sessions most mornings, Twist and Waltz competitions with £50 prizes, and Talent Competitions Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Ivy's band vocalists that season were Eileen Stocker and Ann Stillman; the band entertainers included, from Scotland, the kilted piper and entertainer Pat Gentles, star trumpeter Robey Buckley, Rickie Lane and her guitar, Heather Nicholl at the piano, and drummer Christine Leeworthy.

For those who preferred to just relax in a deckchair and listen, Billy Duncan at the Hammond organ provided the perfect musical background during the mornings in the Gardens at 10.30. The youngest holiday makers were in the capable hands of Uncle Roy and Aunty Betty at the Children's Theatre and Kiddies Corner.

* See photographs of the five-strong saxophone section, *Holiday News* 09.06.1962; pianist Heather Nicoll, *Holiday News* 23.06.1962, and the trombone section in *Holiday News* 30.06.1962.

The eleven-piece dance band in the Royal Hall that season was that of Nat Temple, making their first visit to the Island and taking over from Ivy Benson on 18th June. Temple,* a real

showman and always immaculately dressed *à la* Joe Loss, was a superb clarinet and alto saxophone player, formerly with the bands of Ambrose, Geraldo, Harry Roy and Lew Stone, who also possessed a natural gift for comedy. His was the band that appeared in the background on numerous BBC Radio comedy shows and *Music While You Work*; later he moved into television and such shows as *Crackerjack* and *Jack in the Box*. The vocalists that season were Brian Clark and 'charming' Juliette Raynor, and Carl Volti was the resident pianist. His easy appeal and relaxed style certainly won favour with the audiences that season.

* See photograph in *Holiday News* 09.06.1962 and 14.06.1962.

David Whitfield was the star of the Sunday Celebrity Concert on 17th June, and on the 24th, singer and dancer Penny Nicholls, winner of the All-Britain Tap-Dancing Contest during the war, star of her own Midlands based radio show *Penny Serenade*, and the veteran of countless summer spectaculars and pantomimes.

Versatile and ebullient Roy Castle appeared on Sunday 1st July, and on the 8th, top vocalists Lita Rosa and Billy Raymond. The smooth sounds of trumpet ace Eddie Calvert and his 'C' men echoed around the Royal Hall on Sunday 15th July, and on the 22nd Chris Barber and his 'Trad' jazzmen got everyone's feet a-tapping.*

* See photograph *Holiday News* 14.07.1962.

Ken Dodd - but not yet 'Doddy' - appeared with ex-'Hello Girl' from Liverpool, 'golden voiced' Julie Jones on Sunday 29th July, and on 5th August, it was the turn of Salford-born Al Read, the great radio comedian who, like the music hall comics of old, caricatured people from everyday life in wonderfully observed domestic situations, from loud-mouthed football supporter one minute to hen-pecked husband the next. His repertoire of catchphrases in many voices included 'Right Monkey', 'You'll be lucky . . . I say, you'll be lucky' and 'That's the wife from the kitchen'; his signature song *Such is Life* was also the title of his popular radio show. Unlike some of his contemporaries he did not transfer successfully to television and his three TV series in the 1960s and '70s all flopped. One of Britain's most popular stars, and one of the first female singers to appear regularly on television, Alma Cogan, 'the girl with the giggle in her voice', appeared on Sunday 12th August, and lived up to her reputation for changing frocks a bewildering number of times during just one show.

The Bevs are in town

London's East End vocal trio The Beverley Sisters: Joy, Babs and Teddy, raised the roof on Sunday 19th August. From a music hall family background, television made them stars following a seven-year series *Those Beverley Sisters* and countless London Palladium appearances including three Royal Variety Performances in the 1950s, summer seasons, tours and pantomime. Their signature tune was *Sisters*, and their cabaret-style performances were perfectly matched to their bubbly, down-to-earth characters. Their impeccable choreography, successfully modelled their act on the American Andrews Sisters, turned them into the highest paid UK female act, with huge 'hits' like *The Little Drummer Boy* and *I Saw Mummy Kissing Santa Claus*, and the longest surviving vocal group without a change of personnel.

The Old Time Dance Festival* at the Palace Ballroom commenced on Monday 27th August with the final Festival Ball on Friday 31st. Ivy Benson and her girls provided the music, with over two thousand attending.

* See a photograph of this event in Holiday News 25.08.1962

Ronnie Aldrich and the Squadronaires took over playing for the dancing in the Royal Hall on Monday August 27th, and the following evening there was a Grand Military Ball with the Band of the Irish Guards as guests. The celebrity star on Sunday 2nd September was the Canadian baritone with the film star looks, Edmund Hockridge, the lead character in many fine musicals including *Carousel* and *Annie, Get Your Gun, Can-Can* and *The Pyjama Game*, and opera including *Don Giovanni, La Boheme* and *Peter Grimes*.

The Palace Ballroom and Coliseum

Ronnie Aldrich and The Squadronaires returned to the Palace Ballroom for the season on Monday 18th June together with resident entertainers Peter Morton, Joan Baxter, saxophonist Cliff Townsend and Dennis Roe. From July 15th, two groups were engaged each morning at 10.30 to play for teenage holiday makers: The Echoes (Jazz and Jive) and The Jesters (Beat and Rock), with compere Bobby Allen. The Palace Gardens echoed to the sounds of 'Music for Everyone' with the Squadronets, Peter Morton and Joan Baxter, and featuring the ever-popular Personality Competitions.

Soon after the start of the season Ronnie Aldrich launched an 'Isle of Man Song Contest', with a £100 prize for each of two successful songs with an Isle of Man flavour, one in Waltz style the other in March style. The competition was open to both residents and visitors, and the prize money put up by Leslie Cussons of Ballacotch, Marown, in order that the winning songs 'could be played on the piers and at the airport to welcome holiday makers'.

'Music – Glamour – Colour – Thrills - a real winner'

The spectacular summer show Gerald Palmer's *Carnival on Ice* returned to the Palace Coliseum on 23rd June in a new 1962 edition, with choreography by Beatrice Livesey, the Glamour Icers and the Ice Esquires, and star of the show Sue Park* from *Snow White* at London's Wembley Park. By general agreement it was one of the most lavish shows ever staged on the Island for several seasons. The *Fantasy in Toyland* and *Gay Nineties* scenes were particularly enjoyed.

The supporting cast included Britain's fastest ice spinner 'jiving' George Miller and Scotland's classical ice dancer Jean Colquhoun, the star of BBC Television's *Ice Time* and *The White Horse Inn On Ice*. Ice skating comedians Gerry Williams and Freddie Warren and the comedy team of Gerry Willis and Ronald Ward kept the show moving along at a fast pace with all the thrills, spills, slips and slides one could wish for. The audiences also reserved a warm welcome for the British Junior Champion, Rodney Ward, making his show business debut. The Topliners orchestra was conducted by Gordon Ritchie.

* See *Holiday News* 14.07.1962 for photographs of Sue Park and Jean Colquhoun, and *Holiday News* 07.07.1962 for a view of the chorus.

There were also star guest appearances from Reg 'Confidentially Yours' Dixon making his first appearance 'on ice', Bob and Alf Pearson of 'My Brother and I' fame, and the first appearance in Douglas of the 'zany, riotous . . . bright' comic and mimic Don Smoothey, Mr Showbizz through-and-through, whose endearing, cheeky cockney personality struck a chord with the predominately Northern audiences. The show's host was Anthony Mayne who directed the 'off ice' humour.

Nah for a bit o' class

The Palace Sunday Celebrity Concerts, with Ronnie Aldrich and the Squads together with guest variety stars, began on 24th July with brothers Bob and Alf Pearson - Big Bob and little Alf - side by side entertainers at the piano with 'melodies from out of the sky . . .' Wholesome comedy songs and a range of amusing voices kept these variety headliners in the limelight for decades, their popularity undimmed.

Glamorous singer and actress Janie Marden shared the bill with Irish comedian and violinist *extraordinaire* Harry Bailey on Sunday 1st July. As a young girl she aspired to be a concert pianist, then an opera singer before being discovered by Edward White and auditioning for Cyril Stapleton's BBC Show Band, and eventually developing a solo career. Limerick-born Harry Bailey was sometimes billed as the 'Famous Irish Tenor and Comedian', but usually played the violin in a crazy fashion whilst simultaneously firing off one-liners in a series of 'fiddling and fooling' routines.

The Scots are coming

First on the scene on Sunday 8th July was Scotland's ace accordionist, kilted Will Star, an examiner from North Lanarkshire and exponent of the chromatic button accordion, with a programme a mixture of Scottish melodies and dazzling European virtuoso pieces. He was well matched by 'The Golden Voice' of Lewisman Calum Kennedy, a popular singer of songs in Scots Gaelic during the 1950s and '60s whom many thought unequalled. Invariably dressed in highland costume, he was a larger-than-life character whose voice brought tears to the eyes during his legendary tours of Scotland's remotest communities. In 1957 he had won the World Ballad Championship in Russia and was presented with the gold medal by First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev, who on this occasion apparently refrained from pounding on a table with his pudgy little fists and shouting 'Nyet'. The irrepressibly toothsome Andy Stewart appeared on Sunday 15th, and bringing up the rear on Sunday 22nd, Jimmy Logan, the highly respected singer, actor and comedian, veteran of nine Royal Variety Performances and countless appearances at the London Palladium.

On Sunday 29th July the celebrity group was The Dallas Boys, Britain's good looking, five-piece proto-Boy Band from Leicestershire, a fixture on the teenage shows *Six-Five Special* and *Oh Boy* and Sunday Night at the London Palladium. Although their synchronised dance steps and vocal harmonies would eventually become out-dated, they had over five thousand female fans by the late '50s and faded only during the late 1960s and '70s, having weathered the blast of Merseybeat longer than most. Sharing the bill was 'the godfather of impressionists'

Peter Goodwright, 'The Voice of the Stars', who had appeared in *The Clitheroe Kid* in the 1950s, and once impersonated Tony Hancock in an episode of *Hancock's Half Hour*.

Gary Miller, a singer and actor with a light baritone voice was the celebrity guest on Sunday 5th August. He played key roles in the television series *The Saint* and *Gideon's Way*, and was a regular panellist on *Juke Box Jury*. Sadly, he enjoyed a career of just thirteen years and died young in 1968. He recorded the theme song from ITV's *The Adventures of Robin Hood* which reached number 10 in the UK Singles Chart in 1956, and Sammy Cahn's *There Goes That Song Again* which reached number 29 in 1961. Many will also remember his recordings of *The Ballad of Davey Crocket* and *The Man from Laramie*. David Hughes was the guest artiste on Sunday 12th August, and Gary Miller returned to the Coliseum stage on Sunday 19th. The Carnival Queen Ball took place the following evening.

The Morton Fraser Harmonica Gang, with their resident up-stager, midget Tiny Ross, caused their usual havoc on Sunday 26th August. On Sunday 2nd September the eighteen-year-old 'coloured' singer from Port Elizabeth, South Africa, Danny Williams, was the star of the evening. Dubbed 'The British Johnny Mathis', his 1961 recording of *Moon River* was considered 'unsurpassable' by Nat 'King' Cole. His delivery was smooth and stylish, but his career bloomed just as the era of ballad singers was nearing its end, and, like so many others, his career wilted amid the unstoppable cacophony of the new pop age. Nevertheless, he remained an easy-listening favourite, and in 1963 he joined Helen Shapiro's twenty city tour whose stars included the Beatles! His reputation endured and he resurfaced in the 1970s and again in the 1990s.

The Season's spectacular family show, *Carnival on Ice*, closed on Saturday 8th September.

Derby Castle

Karma,* the hugely popular hypnotist, was once again in residence from 24th June, with wrestling taking over on Mondays and Wednesdays.

* See Holiday News 21.07.1962 for a photograph.

The Gaiety Theatre

The Happy Holiday Show commenced its seasonal run at the Gaiety Theatre on Monday 18th June with performances each evening at 7.45. Advertised as 'a real summer holiday revue mixture', the show starred Joe Crosbie* and Stella Hartley* at the head of a full cast of eighteen performers which included a ladies' dancing chorus. Colin Beach and Mary Miller entertained at two pianos; Jimmy Tattersall and Company provided many of the humorous antics in a show packed full of songs and sketches, which also featured a ventriloquist, Dave and Joe O'Duffy, and Shirley May and Anthony Menary. 'Musical Madness' came in the form of Harry Carter, a one-man band who allegedly played one hundred musical instruments, assisted by his wife and partner Doray, a pianist and accordionist (and, incidentally, a children's author of note), the veterans of seven round-the-world tours. Stella's on-stage party, with members of the audience of all ages invited onto the stage to compete for prizes, was as popular as ever. The show closed on Sunday 16th September.

* See *Holiday News* 01.09.1962 for a photograph of Joe Crosby, and *Holiday News* 14.07.1962 and 21.07.1962 for photographs of Stella Hartley.

The smaller venues

Ted Reece presented *Star Parade* at the Crescent Pavilion starring The Echoes,* billed as 'a bright musical combination', and comprising two guitars, an accordion and the group's 'driving force' drummer Laurie Jay. The supporting acts included Bobby Allan and The Jesters, and recording stars Vince Eager,* 'shaking the Pavilion to the core', Liverpool-born Johnny Gentle,* Danny Rivers, Nelson Keene, and Michael Cox from the London Palladium. For many visitors it would be the last chance to see a show at the favourite venue as it was scheduled for demolition during the winter.

* *The Echoes* (see *Holiday News* 09.06.1962) had been formed two years earlier for a concert tour with Conway Twitty and Johnny Preston. They also toured with Gene Vincent in 1961 and appeared in variety shows with Frankie Howerd, The Mudlarks and The Temperance Seven, and continued to tour extensively throughout the 1960s, but disbanded in 1971.

* Vince Eager (see *Holiday News* 30.06.1962), who had holidayed at Howstrake Holiday Camp as a youngster ten years earlier, was a well-known face on television with many appearances on *Drumbeat*, *Oh Boy*, and *Six-Five Special*. He toured with Eddie Cochran, Gene Vincent, Billy Fury and Marty Wilde.

* Johnny Gentle from BBC's *Saturday Club* briefly toured with The Silver Beatles in 1960, but his solo career never really took off, and he achieved little success with his records.

The White City Fairground - 'The Fun Centre of the Island' - changed hands that year from brother to brother with promises of various improvements to the facilities. A popular family excursion, it was open Monday-Saturday from 10.00 am until 11.00 pm, and on Sundays from 2.00 until 11.00 pm.

Crowds of holiday makers regularly made for Douglas Head to see the *Happy and Snappy Holiday Show*, or to the Douglas Head Hotel to dance to the Pete Cunningham Trio mornings and evenings. For those in search of a more genteel atmosphere, Rushen Abbey Gardens provided afternoon teas, and music and dance competitions with Jack Dalston and his orchestra (quintet) from 10.30 am.

'Don't be at a loose end on Sunday night – get on with it!'

There was always plenty of activity on tap at Douglas Holiday Camp: 'Friendship and Good Fellowship', and dancing at 10.30 am and 7.30 pm to Jack Stone and his band, variety entertainment from a troupe of ten entertainers, a Manx band, the Phantoms Rhythm Group, and The Selmer Dance Band of six young amateurs from Oldham. There was Old Time Dancing on Tuesday evenings and Friday night was designated Carnival Night when the accent was on comedy and audience participation was invited. Every Sunday evening there was a variety band show with guest artistes including the 'magical' Walters; accordionist Toni Nolani who led the communal singing; Manx entertainers The Melodians, Tony James, Margaret Lewthwaite, Ricky Dobay, Harry Leslie, Vickey Gillespie, Ted Maurice and Dorice, and 'not a dull moment' with compere Bob Nicholl in charge of proceedings. For the more energetic, the Switzerland Sports Field was close by.

On 31st July an open-air Jive Barbeque with Ivy Benson and her All-Girl Band took place at King George V Park, and on 12th August, a Television All-Stars verses an Isle of Man Police team soccer match took place there, with variety headliners Bernard Bresslaw, Mike and Bernie Winters, comedian Dave King and disc-jockey Pete Murray supposedly turning out for the celebrities. However, as was often the case with such celebrity sports events, it is not certain exactly who appeared for the All-Stars.*

* I remember a similar event scheduled to take place at the time of the Coronation in 1953 at Kearley and Tonge's sports field near Redbridge. We all waited for the 'celebrity' coach to arrive, autograph albums in hand, and when it finally did, were disappointed when nobody anyone recognised got off. 'Ah', said an official, 'they may not be stars now, but they might be in the future'. They were all either barely remembered footballing 'has-beens', television cameramen or sound recordists. I left the football field clutching my Coronation pen and mug, and mooched about in search of the tea tent.

Many hotels also provided entertainment, sometimes in the form of a pianist, but Port Soderick Hotel featured entertainers Johnny Fallon, guitar, vocalist and impressionist; drummer Paula Pike formerly with Ivy Benson's band; pianist Ken Douglas, and vocalists Eric Cochran and Vikki Gillespie. The Majestic Hotel, Onchan Head, boasted dancing and cabaret nightly in the ballroom, and a 'nite' club with dancing to three bands. The Falcon Cliff Hotel engaged an entertainer 'unique to the Island' for their top lounge: pianist Dave Studdard from Burnley, Lancashire, and his Bird Organ.* At the Belle Vue Hotel, Port Erin, visitors and residents alike could dance to The Tony Crooks Quartet until 15th September.

* Sydney Bird, entrepreneur and maker of general electrical components, toy cookers and washing machines amongst other items, moved his business to Poole in Dorset in 1953 and, with over one thousand employees, began to make TV tuners, electric organs and guitar and bass amplifiers for the Rock 'n' Roll era.

And still they come . . .

The Island always had a special holiday attraction for many families who came again and again for decades, and even in the 1960s when young people were becoming less and less satisfied with going on holiday with mum and dad and their younger brothers and sisters and looked for new opportunities to spend their vacations with friends of their own age, many older folk still retained a loyal affection for the Island. The local newspapers managed to track down two such veterans who would not have dreamed of holidaying anywhere else: eighty-six-year-old Mr F. Crook of Sparkhill, Birmingham, who had been coming to the Island for seventy-three years, and Mr George Ingham of Salford, who had holidayed three times each year since 1930.

1963

1963 in a nutshell

The most severe winter since 1947 is recorded; Prime Minister Harold Macmillan resigns due to ill-health, and is succeeded, briefly, by Alec Douglas-Home; *Summer Holiday* starring Cliff Richard premieres in London; the Beatles release their debut album *Please Please Me*; British Railways Chairman Dr Beeching signals rail network 'cuts' in a report; Kim Philby named as the 'third man' in the Burgess and Maclean spy ring; the first Leeds International Piano Competition is won by Michael Roll; Vauxhall launches the Viva, and Ford begins to

manufacture the Anglia; the James Bond film *From Russia with Love* is released; *Dr Who* with William Hartnell as The Doctor first aired in November with the Daleks making their first appearance in December; Alistair MacLean's 'chiller thriller' *Ice Station Zebra* and John le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* are published; Hugh 'Downton Abbey' Bonneville, actor, and film critic Mark Kermode are born; Sylvia Plath, poet, and music hall veteran Max Miller die; Granada Television first broadcasts *World in Action*; *Ready Steady Go!* is premiered on ITV; the *Stanley Baxter* and *Dick Emery Shows* are first aired.

The Island's first American-style Casino was opened at the Castle Mona Hotel by actress Diana Dors on Monday 27th May with five hundred guests attending. First proposed in 1955 amid outrage by church leaders, the aim was to present late night drinking, slot machines and low-stake gaming for the average holiday maker.

It was a year of mixed fortunes for various schemes and plans to boost the tourist industry on the Island. Car rallying, last seen on the island 1950, returned in May with a vengeance in the shape of the Manx Trophy Rally, with assistance from the Tourist Board. The prizes were presented at the new Casino. In June the Ramsey Hydro re-opened as the Grand Island Hotel after an injection of £150,000 of Government investment; in September, the plans to redevelop Douglas Holiday Camp were given the go-ahead in principle. In October the Tourist Board refused, however, to continue financial assistance for the International Festival of Music and Dancing (first held 1962) and plans for the 1964 Festival were abandoned. The Douglas Head Chairlift became a casualty of cuts despite a vote in Tynwald of twenty-one to seven in favour of its retention. It was hoped that the lift would act as a link to the scenic road to Port Soderick, and with an estimated 150 - 200,000 visitors using it would generate a profit of £6,000. Plans for the re-development of the Villa Marina Gardens were passed by five votes to two by Douglas Council Parks Committee, to include an ambitious 110 x 42ft swimming pool, Turkish Baths, new colonnades and a café. However, the plan to site the proposed pool next to either the Gaiety Theatre or at the Derby Castle were abandoned despite a vote of sixteen to six in favour, in the face of strong opposition to the inevitable 'mutilation of the gardens'.

The arrival of the Queen Mother on the Royal Yacht Britannia on 4th July was naturally a huge success. Her Majesty's hectic schedule included official visits to Ramsey and Peel, Port St Mary and Port Erin, attendance at the Tynwald Day ceremony and an open-air service at Kirk Braddan, and a ride on a steam train.

In August the Manx pop group *The Phantoms* won the top prize at the new Manx Festival of Modern Music. The Mersey Beat Boat, whose return trips between Liverpool and the island featured on-board bands such as Gerry and the Pacemakers, Billy J Kramer and the Dakotas, the Swinging Blue Jeans and the Merseybeats was a highlight of the summer season.

The Villa Marina

The summer season at the Villa Marina and Gardens opened in June with dancing and cabaret featuring Ivy Benson and her All-Girl band with trumpeter Robey Buckley, vocalists Anne Bridgman* and Eileen Stocker. Ivy and her girls could be heard in the Gardens daily at 2.30pm, along with vocalist Ann Stillman, Ann Chalice and local pianist Heather Nicholl, at the

afternoon concerts which included the popular Talent Competitions and Bathing Beauty Contests. Teenagers could burn off their energy from 11.00 until 12.30 each morning at Ivy Benson's Teen-Beat dance sessions featuring her Jive Group; for those wishing to simply relax in the Gardens each morning from 10.30 until 12.30, Billy Duncan entertained at the Hammond organ with selections to suit every mood. For the youngest holiday makers, the Kiddies Theatre could be found in Kiddies Corner with entertainments and games hosted by Uncle Roy and Aunty Betty.

* The lead guitar with the Ivy Benson spin-off band The Beat Chicks between 1963 and 1967.

From mid-June Nat Temple and his band - 'Dancing for Diamonds' - took over from Ivy Benson for the evening dances and featured Twist Competitions and Old Time dances supported by local group The Phantoms.

'Des - short for "desperate"'.*

The guest celebrity at the Sunday Concert on 2nd June was former Butlins redcoat Des O'Connor, singer and comedian, and host of his own television show that year, the *Des O'Connor Show*. He later became one of television's most popular and enduring chat and game shows hosts in a career lasting more than fifty years. For his peers, he was the ultimate entertainer, who made over one thousand appearances at the London Palladium. In support were Vince and Rita Starr with Ivy Benson providing the musical interludes.

* One of many famous 'put downs' from Eric Morecambe, some of which were apparently devised by Des O'Connor himself!

The next two Sundays saw Gary Miller and the veteran comedian and actor from Gateshead, Bobby Pattinson from Gateshead, with support from Ivy Benson, and the great all-round entertainer Roy Castle, comedian, singer, dancer and multi-instrumentalist, who was appearing with Morecambe and Wise in ATV's *Two of a Kind* that year. Nat Temple and his band provided an entertaining programme of music to suit all tastes.

On Sunday 30th June, teen idol, film star and rival to Cliff Richard, Adam Faith appeared with his backing group the Roulettes, his touring band between 1961-63. *What Do You Want? (if you don't want money)* had been his first 'hit' single in 1959; his last chart 'hit' would be in October 1963 with The Roulettes, *The First Time*. The old-fashioned tenor balladeer, David Whitfield, who peaked during the 1950s, appeared on Sunday 7th July (and again on Sunday 11th August). Like so many singers, his career faded during the 1960s. Ivy Benson lent musical support, and was also on hand the following Sunday, the 14th, when the guest artiste was that risqué old time music hall comedian Lex 'Sexy Lex' McLean, then at the peak of his popularity, with his catch phrase 'Keep it Bright, Keep it Bright' and a fund of almost 'blue' stories.

The appearance of The Temperance Seven, the 1920's style jazz band, whose performances were characterised by a proto-Pythonesque air of fantasy, on Sunday 21st July will have delighted those in tune with the current resurgent craze for trad-jazz. Founded in 1955 by students of Chelsea Art School, they achieved fame with *You're Driving Me Crazy* and *Pasadena*, which became their signature tune in 1961, and a quirkily skilful blend of musicianship and humour, accompanied by a bizarre choice of musical instruments including

the tuba, clarinet, piano, harmonium, trombone, banjo, spoons, trumpet, euphonium and sousaphone plus vocals. They faded during the 1960s when the taste for trad-jazz waned, reformed, and may still be active today! The following Sunday, 28th July, Anne 'Lay Down Your Arms' Shelton topped the bill as she did at all the major variety theatres; she was always a great draw in Douglas.

Just a dumb blonde?

The impossibly proportioned glamour model, pin-up girl, singer, cabaret star, and minor starlet in undistinguished films, Sabrina,* was the celebrity on Sunday 4th August. With her famous hour-glass figure, and vital statistics of 42.5 inch bust and 19-inch waist, 'Sabby' was known as 'The Maid of the Mountains' and unappealingly as 'the Hunchfront' of Lime Grove. She may have been the least talented and most photographed 'bombshell' in the Marilyn Monroe and Shirley Eaton vein, but also the shrewdest of self-publicists. Nat Temple and his band were in support, but one might wonder how they managed to keep their 'eyes front' and concentrate on their music.

* Stockport-born Sabrina (Norma Ann Sykes) 'bounced' into the world of showbusiness in Arthur Askey's *Before Your Very Eyes*, where she earned the 'dumb blonde' tag that she never lost. She seems to have lived the kind of dream lifestyle envied by millions of her fans but suffered from rheumatic fever for much of her life. She was awarded an honorary D.Litt by Leeds University, failed to break into 'tinsel town', and in later life became something of a recluse in California, although she always denied she was living in squalor.

On Sunday 18th August 'The Singing Milkman', Craig Douglas, voted Best New Singer in *New Musical Express* in 1959, and his backing group the Caravelles topped the bill. His first chart 'hit' was *Only Sixteen* in 1959, and his last chart entry was *Town Crier* in 1963; thereafter his career faded with the advent of the Beatles, on whose first major stage show he had topped the bill.

There were Twist and Jive Sessions with Ivy Benson's girls and the Phantoms on Sunday 22nd August at the Open-Air Carnival in the Villa Marina Gardens. The advertising posters promised Fun! – Masks! – Streamers! and a BBQ. The final star of the season appeared on Sunday 1st September, glamorous, exuberant 'pocket' bombshell Essex girl Yana, ex-model and singer who was just past her peak of fame and no longer a name, a face and a figure. Like Sabrina, hers was a modest talent, but her perfume 'could be detected throughout the theatre' according to one artiste who appeared with her. Ivy Benson was again on hand with musical interludes and selection for all.

The smaller venues and cinemas

Sadly, the Derby Castle could no longer be regarded as one of the Island's major entertainment venues, at least, not in the same way it had when Florrie Forde and other great stars dominated the stage season after season, and was now the venue for wrestling, and Karma, 'the lightning hypnotist'.

At the Castle Mona Casino there was a nightly floor show. The Gaiety Theatre showed *No Limit* for the umpteenth time, followed by The Happy Holiday Show of 1963, 'A Merry Whirligig of Fun, Melody and Laughter' starring the irrepressible Jay Martel, Stella Hartley and her on stage 'party', and 'a host of radio and television favourites'. From June, Roy Harvey

and his band provided the dance music at Douglas Holiday Camp featuring Old Time and Carnival Nights, and a Sunday Night Band Show with guest artistes, with the local Vampires Rhythm Group in support. There was all-star entertainment at 11.00am and 3.00pm on Douglas Head with seating for a thousand. 'All the Fun of the Fair' at White City Amusement Park on Onchan Head drew large crowds in search of family entertainment including the Playdium, dodgems, electric motorboats, the Rolo Coaster, a mile of side shows, cafés and stalls.

The Crescent Cinema showed *The Longest Day*, the American epic of the D-day Normandy landings stuffed with a huge cast of celebrity stars, mostly with little to say or do, and two thousand serving servicemen as extras. Today it has a documentary value, is undoubtedly a spectacle, and along with *A Bridge Too Far* and *Saving Private Ryan*, one of the best war films ever made. Not in the same league, but enjoyable enough on a wet Saturday afternoon in February, was *Taras Bulba*, the pseudo-historical hotch-potch starring Tony Curtis and Yul Brynner and based on the supposed exploits of several vaguely historical characters.

The Royalty Cinema programmed the huge box office success *Summer Holiday*, the song and dance musical featuring sixteen 'hits' starring Cliff Richard and Lauri Peters who venture on a bus mechanics' holiday across Europe to avoid a typically wet British summer in their bus-converted-into-a-caravan. Yuk! and double Yuk! Later in the season one of the outstanding 'Christmas' films of all time was shown: *The Great Escape*.

Starring Marlon Brando, Trevor Howard and Richard Harris, the epic historical drama *Mutiny on the Bounty* was shown at the Picture House. Filmed partly on location in the South Pacific, it was panned by the critics and lost an estimated \$6 million at the box office. As one critic wrote: 'as the action reached its third hour the film teetered into absurdity', with Brando's 'egotistically disturbed . . . tortured scowling' and Hamlet-like 'hamming' largely to blame. Sentimental bilge above decks, just bilge below.

'Stunning, exciting and moving' was the verdict of the film of George Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess* shown at the Strand Cinema, which was hugely successful despite production and casting problems, mainly due to its controversial subject matter. Sydney Poitier, Dorothy Dandridge and Sammy Davis Jr. are outstanding. Later in the season half-brothers Kirk Douglas and Tony Curtis hacked and pillaged their way through Northumbria in the commercially successful epic 'Norse Opera' *The Vikings*, and Kirk Douglas appeared again in *Spartacus*, which according to the posters 'has everything that makes entertainment great!' The gory battle scenes cut because of negative audience reactions at the original test screenings were reinstated during the film's restoration in 1991. As *Variety* put it: 'It has what it takes to satisfy the multitude'.

The Palace Ballroom and Coliseum (Theatre)

Early in the season the Clyde Valley Stompers, Scotland's premier New Orleans style instrumental band with a 'big, brash sound', appeared in the Ballroom, with vocalist Fionna Duncan. The group had appeared occasionally with Morecambe and Wise but split and went their separate ways that year. The supporting band was the Suedettes, a local group who grew out of Douglas Holiday Camp and were well known at the Manx Cat Jive Club.

Ronnie Aldrich and the Squadronaires appeared for the first time that season on 17th June and thereafter from 8.00 - 11.30 each evening. The Squadronettes gave their popular afternoon concerts, 'Music for Everyone', in the Gardens from 1st July and incorporated Stella Hartley's enduringly popular Talent Spot.

The spectacular summer show that season at the Coliseum was *Carnival on Ice 1963* starring Jacqueline Harbord, the nineteen-year-old 1962 British Figure Skating Champion, World Professional Ladies Champion 1963-64, and a star of *The Cool Spot*, a pop music show set in an ice stadium and featuring choreographed interpretations of current 'hits'. The supporting cast included the Four Jones Boys and impressionist George Meaton, who produced an astonishing range of sounds encompassing everything from trains to creaking gates.

The Big Band Nights (later called 'One Night Stand') commenced on Saturday 13th July and featured Bob Miller and the Millermen. During August Humphrey Lyttleton, Chris Barber and Otilie Patterson appeared, and on Thursday 15th Mr Acker Bilk and his Paramount Jazz Band. In the forefront of the 1960s trad-jazz boom, complete with signature bowler hat, striped waistcoat and goatee beard, Bilk was a clarinettist with a distinctive sound, and vocalist; his instrumental 'hit' *Stranger on the Shore* was the biggest selling 'single' in 1962 with fifty-five weeks in the charts.

The celebrity artiste on Sunday 23rd June was the acclaimed operatic tenor David Hughes whose repertoire ranged from Mozart to stylishly sung popular ballads; Ronnie Aldrich and his boys provided the musical and comedy interludes. The 24th and 25th July were designated 'Late Nights' at the Palace Ballroom and featured the City of Edinburgh Police Pipe Band and Terry Lightfoot's Jazzmen. On Sunday 30th June, the lantern-jawed, clean-cut Irish crooner in the Val Doonican mould, Ronnie Carroll, topped the bill. He was well known from frequent appearances on the *Morecambe and Wise* show and later Yorkshire Television's Les Dawson's *Sez Lez*, and had been placed fourth in the 1962 Eurovision Song Contest with *Ring-a-Ding Girl*. His current 'hit', *Say Wonderful Things*, achieved the same position in 1963 with twenty-eight points behind Denmark, Switzerland and Italy (which was significantly better than the Dutch entry, *A Musical Box*, which scored an ignominious 'nul points'), and was eventually placed sixth in the UK singles chart. Also on the bill was the veteran comedy impressionist Peter Goodwright whose voice was heard regularly in the 1950s on radio's *The Clitheroe Kid*, and in the last ever radio episode of *Hancock's Half Hour* when he impersonated Hancock himself. Often referred to as 'the Godfather of impressionists', he subsequently became the mainstay of ITV's comedy sketch show *Who Do You Do* in the 1970s, and in Harry Enfield's 'spoof' documentary biopic *Norbert Smith – A Life* in the 1980s.

'Two nuts in a madhouse!'

Morecambe and Wise, currently engaged for the summer in *Show Time* at the Jubilee Theatre, Blackpool, topped the bill in front of a full house on Sunday 7th August, with Ronnie Aldrich and the Squads in support. BUT: 'Who is Morecambe and who is Wise?'

Wise about the other one: 'He is the tall, thin specky one . . . raised on spaghetti . . . collects beer mats (tegestology) . . . dresses racy . . . pyjama jacket at dinner, old socks, bow ties and football shorts'.

Eric about the other one: Ern is the short, roly poly one . . . obsession for mastodon on toast . . . has been known to eat a dog biscuit with a dollop of mustard . . . is cricket daft . . . he bats, which explains his resemblance to Dracula’.*

* From an interview in the *Dublin Evening Press*.

The great Scottish actor, film star and entertainer Jimmy Logan was the celebrity star on Sunday 14th July. Always a great draw during ‘Scots Weeks’ in Douglas, he later won acclaim in his one-man show about the life of Sir Harry Lauder. The following Sunday, 21st July, the five-piece vocal group the Dallas Boys - considered by some to have been Britain’s first ‘boy band’ - and comedian and actor Derek Dene - sometimes billed as a comic juggler and dancer - entertained the holiday makers, and on Sunday 28th July it was the turn of Cliff Richard and the Shadows. The pace of Cliff Richard’s so-called Rock ‘n’ Roll phase (from his debut in 1958 until 1963 or thereabouts) was showing signs of flagging, but his individually British ‘take’ on Rock ‘n’ Roll would endure for many years.

The guest celebrity artiste on Sunday 4th August was Ivor Emmanuel, the Welsh baritone from TWW’s Sunday evening Welsh language ‘hit’ programme *Land of Song*, which at its peak regularly attracted ten million viewers. He was accompanied by actress and singer Patricia Bredin, in 1957, the first ever UK entrant of the Eurovision Song Contest, and for a short time, his wife. She appeared regularly in BBC Television’s much-loved variety show *The Good Old Days*. The Sunday Show on 18th August starred the comedian and compere Don Arrol, taking a short break during his third Blackpool season. In 1960 and 1961 he had deputised for Bruce Forsyth at the London Palladium, but fame arrived too late . . . he died from a heart attack in 1967. The supporting act was Field Marshall Montgomery look-alike and mimic supreme Peter Cavanagh, BBC Radio’s ‘the voice of them all’ during the 1940s and ‘50s, famous for his impersonation of Churchill and popular radio personalities. Later that night in the Ballroom no less than three bands - the Squads, Nat Temple and his band, and Ivy Benson and her girls - played for the Midnight Charity Ball, with local groups the Phantoms and the Suedettes in support.

The following week was a week of competitions. On Monday 19th the Carnival Queen Selection Dance took place; on Tuesday 20th the Television Top Groups Selection Competition began, and on Wednesday 21st the Children’s Carnival Fancy Dress Parade. On Thursday 22nd the Dagenham Girl Pipers* appeared at the Grand Carnival Ball, after which there was a grand firework display. The final of Stella Hartley’s Talent Show took place on Friday 23rd in the Gardens,* with the Squadronettes providing the musical selections; a hectic week ended on Friday 23rd with a Swingin’ Night and Finale of the Television Top Groups Selection Competition.

* Founded in the early 1930s as a traditional Scottish Marching Pipe Band, the Dagenham Girl Pipers were soon in demand at over four hundred engagements every year, with several bands engaged, and world tours. They once performed before Hitler. In the decade or so after the war they were regularly seen on television, toured to Australia, Canada, America, South Africa and again throughout Europe. They reverted to amateur status during the 1960s, and still perform today.

* The following day, Saturday 24th August, the Palace Gardens closed - rather early - for the season.

'Go sing at the London Palladium . . . they'll invite you back.'

The last great vocal star to appear in the Coliseum that season was the lyric soprano Adele Leigh on Sunday 25th August. Famous for roles in Mozart, Verdi, Strauss and Beethoven at Covent Garden from the age of nineteen, she had sung the role of Amor in Gluck's *Orfeo* in Kathleen Ferrier's moving last performance. Between 1963 until 1972 she migrated to operetta at the Vienna Volksoper, during which time she became a familiar face (and voice) on British television. Off-stage, she was a charming hostess and a lively conversationalist. In complete contrast was the brilliant and entertaining television ventriloquist Dennis Spicer together with his 'partners' James Green and Maxwell Monkey.* He was appearing in the Ken Dodd Show at Liverpool's Royal Court Theatre that season. Almost forgotten today, he tragically died in a car crash on the A1 in November 1964 after performing at two charity shows; the Queen sent a tribute, the result of his memorable Royal Variety Performance that year in which he appeared with a posh voiced 'dummy' corgi.

* 'Little person' Kenny Baker, actor and musician, was the memorable 'vent' dummy at that Royal Variety Performance who came alive at the end of the act and ran off the stage. He later starred in fifteen films and played R2D2 in Star Wars.

The Grand Glittering Old-Time Dance Festival, with Ivy Benson and her All-Girl Band and Billy Duncan, organ, took place in the Ballroom on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 2.30pm the week of Monday 25th August. The final week of the season in the Ballroom, 2nd - 7th September, was given over to 'Popular Mixed Dancing' with Ronnie Aldrich and the Squads, supported by the Suedettes.

And finally: 'The ultimate entertainer' entertains

The last variety entertainer to appear at the Coliseum that season was Des O'Connor on Sunday 1st September, with the Birmingham Folk Group and the Squads in support, and the stars and cast of *Carnival on Ice* 1963 packed away their skates for the final time that season on Saturday 7th September.

1964

1964 in a nutshell

In October Harold Wilson becomes Prime Minister; *Top of the Pops* is first aired on BBC Television; the film *Zulu* is released with Michael Caine in his first starring role; £10 notes are issued for the first time since World War II; the 'pirate' radio station Radio Caroline begins to broadcast just outside British territorial waters; Mods and Rockers enjoy 'punch-ups' on Clacton and Brighton beaches; Liverpool win the First Division title for the sixth time; the Beatles' first film *A Hard Day's Night* is released; the Post Office Tower in London is completed; *Match of the Day* is first aired on BBC Two; Great Britain wins four gold medals at the Tokyo Olympics; the Labour Party win the General Election in October; the ITV 'soap' *Crossroads* is first aired; Ian Fleming's *You Only Live Twice* and Ruth Rendell's first novel *From Doon With Death* are published; the deaths are reported of the deaths of 'Bond' author Ian Fleming and poet Edith Sitwell; *Danger Man* returns to ITV; the first series of *Sherlock Holmes*,

with Douglas Wilmer as the suavely convincing detective, and Nigel Stock as his less bumbling-than-usual companion, first aired on BBC Television; *The Likely Lads* first appeared in December; *Carry on Cleo* and *Carry On Spying* are released; Peter Sellers stars unforgettably in Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove*; Manx Radio is launched; *I'm Sorry, I'll Read That Again* was first broadcast on the BBC Home Service.

Douglas Corporation (Douglas Town Council Finance Committee) agreed to purchase the Derby Castle site from the Palace & Derby Castle Company for an estimated £80,000. A £1,000,000 face-lift was envisaged and would include a sports and social centre, swimming pool and 'glass-fronted' indoor area for sunbathers. Promoted as the '... the indoor all-weather facility that Douglas lacks' (had always lacked), this was the first hint of the venue that would ultimately become the ill-fated Summerland complex. The clearing of the site and construction was scheduled to commence in October and be completed for the start of the 1965 summer season. This proved to be an over ambitious timetable.

Manx Radio first broadcast to the 'lil' nation' on 29th June, meanwhile Radio Caroline arrived in Ramsey Bay on Tynwald Day and, anchored four miles offshore, began to 'blast out' pop music all over the North of England.

The Villa Marina

Ivy Benson and her All-Girl Band returned to the Villa Marina at the beginning of July and played for dancing every evening at 8.00 supported by the Phantoms Beat Group, for the afternoon concerts every afternoon at 2.30, and later for the Talent Competitions and Bathing Beauty Contests on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Billy Duncan and his Hammond organ entertained the crowds in the Royal Hall between 10.30 and 12.30 each morning, and early in the season in the Gardens from 2.30 until 4.30 until Ivy Benson took over. In August there was an Old Time Carnival Ball and dance competitions with Ivy Benson and her girls providing the music.

Ivy Benson's spin-off group the Alley Cats played up-beat dance music each morning for teenagers between 11.00 and 12.30 in sessions styled Teen-beat as they had the previous season. Uncle Roy and Aunty Betty entertained the very youngest holiday makers at Kiddies Corner and the Children's Theatre each afternoon at 2.45.

Billed as 'The Season's Outstanding Attraction', the main dance band for the summer was Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen, supported by the Phantoms, who appeared every night from 8.00 until 11.30. Wednesday evenings were designated Masked Ball Nights with 'Hats, Masks, Balloons and Streamers', and Thursday evenings, 'Dolly Nights', when complimentary recordings of the musical *Hello Dolly* were awarded to lucky couples.

The first Sunday Celebrity Concert of the season took place on 31st May and starred Donald Peers, a heart-throb in the late 1940s and early '50s, but almost forgotten by his fans by the mid-1960s. The Lon Dhoo Choir provided a varied selection of popular choruses, and Ivy Benson and her girls supplied the musical interludes as usual. The following Sunday, 7th June, the British husband and wife country music duo Micky and Griff topped the bill. They had honed their style, which was marked by a dash of comedy, whilst appearing regularly with

Max Bygraves and later Lonnie Donegan. Their biggest chart success was *A Little Bitty Tear* in 1962; they continued to make regular television appearances and to tour the provinces into the 1970s. Ad-libber supreme, comedian Ted Ray, brought the house down on Sunday 14th June. He began his career in the 1930s as 'Nedlo, the Gypsy Violinist' (his real name was Charlie Olden ie. 'Nedlo', and was actually an accomplished fiddler), and was well-known from his BBC Radio series *The Ted Ray Show* in the 1950s, *Ray's a Laugh* from the late 1940s until 1961, and from 1957, as a resident panellist on *Does The Team Think* along with 'Prof' Jimmy Edwards, Arthur Askey and Tommy Trinder.

The American-born tenor Lester Ferguson gave a delightful programme of popular songs and arias from the worlds of opera, operetta and musical theatre on Sunday 21st June, supported by actor Johnny Allan, and Ivy Benson, who provided popular musical selections. The final Sunday concert of the month featured The Crickets, originally Buddy Holly's backing group, but by the mid-1960s enjoying some lingering success in Britain, and Ian Crawford and the Boomerangs, who after some years in Australia, returned to Britain as a support group for the Beatles and, in 1964, released their chart success *Don't Let Her be Your Baby*.

July was something of a bumper month for comedians at the Villa Marina with Ken Dodd, Dick Emery, Lex McClean, Ronnie Dale and Billy Gordon all appearing at the Sunday Celebrity Concerts. First to appear, though, on Sunday 5th July, were The Swinging Blue Jeans, the *Shadows*-style instrumental band whose brief spell of success flourished and declined with the rise and fall of Mersey Beat; their best-known 'hit' was *Hippy Hippy Shake* in 1964. Ken Dodd introduced his new signature song, *Happiness* in his pleasant light baritone voice, intermingled with rapid delivery one-liners. Dick Emery presented his assortment of monstrous characters who first appeared the previous year in his top television show *The Dick Emery Show*. 'Edgy' Scottish comedian Lex McClean, one of Scotland's most popular comedy entertainers, was supported by his comedy feed from Glasgow's Pavilion Theatre, kilted Ronnie 'Nobody sleeps when I'm on stage' Dale, blasting away on the bagpipes and trombone, and Billy Gordon, a fellow member of Ronnie Dale's quartet Melody Makers.

Helen Shapiro, who burst into the charts in the early 1960s with *You Don't Know* and *Walkin' Back to Happiness* when she was just fourteen was the star of the concert on Sunday 2nd August, accompanied by the Treble Tones. With her strikingly mature voice, she was voted Britain's Top Female Singer and was one of the supporting acts for the Beatles' first tour of Britain. Still only in her late teens, her career began to fade in the wake of the rise of singers like Dusty Springfield, Sandie Shaw and Cilla Black. Milkman-turned-pop singer, Craig 'Only Sixteen' Douglas, topped the bill on Sunday 9th August, supported by television actor Gordon Peters, who later appeared in *Are You Being Served? Hi-Di-Hi!* and *Dad's Army*.

Al 'Right, Monkey!' Read, the Lancashire comedian famous for his range of characters who featured in monologues about the vagaries of everyday life, or 'pictures of life', as he called them, brought the house down on Sunday 16th August. On Sunday 30th August Roy Castle, the supreme all-round entertainer - and incidentally a fine jazz trumpeter - at the start of his career, took the Villa Marina by storm with a *tour de force* of singing, dancing, comedy and instrumental virtuosity.

The Palace Ballroom and Coliseum (Theatre)

The season at the Palace Ballroom and Coliseum opened on 11th July with a 'One Night Stand' featuring the Hollies, with the Falcons and Suedettes in support. What would be their last season in Douglas for Ronnie Aldrich and the 'New Look' Squadronaires commenced on 15th July with Rick Kennedy, Eve Delroy, Cliff Townsend (sax), Red Price and the Blue Beats and the Falcons in support. From Sunday 21st June, the Squadronettes could be heard in the Gardens with 'Music for Everyone' directed by Cliff Townsend, with Rick Kennedy and Eve Delroy, and Stella Hartley's 'Talent Spot'.

The season's summer show at the Palace Coliseum Theatre in the year before it was demolished, Gerald Palmer's Super Summer Show *Make it Tonight*, opened on 20th June. Billed as 'the show that had everything', the principal star was Dickie Valentine, singer and impressionist of famous singers such as Frankie Laine, Mario Lanza and Johnny Ray, whose boyish good looks and endearing personality had made him a top attraction before the age of Rock 'n' Roll. A vocalist in Ted Heath's band together with Lita Roza and Dennis Lotis, he soon became a major variety and panto star, with a Royal Variety Performance appearance in 1954 and appearances at the London Palladium in 1955. His first number 1 UK 'hit' *Christmas Alphabet* was aimed at the Christmas market; his 1961 television series *Calling Dickie Valentine* made him a household name. He weathered the Mersey Beat tsunami that swept away so many singers before it to become a popular live performer, only to be killed in a car accident in 1971. The cast also included Don Smoothery (one half of the former Smoothery and Layton), Tommy Layton (the other half of Smoothery and Layton), and an 'International Star Company'. Principal amongst these were Van Buren and Greta, 'Holland's greatest magician', formerly the Amazing Yoxanis, in 'a whirlwind of spectacular mystery' featuring their world-famous vanishing motorcycle trick. Fred and Greta were illusionists with a long career which stretched into the 1990s, and they appeared with many of the most famous variety acts of the day including Norman Evans, Donald Peers, and David Nixon. The Maureen Miles Dancers* added a touch of high-kicking glamour to the proceedings, whilst comedy adagio dance sensations Martin and Sylvia Konyot presented their disaster ridden *tableaux* to smoochy music during which he frequently drops her, gets kicked in the face and repeatedly trips before exiting at the end of a fast-paced 1920s 'flapper' routine which left the audience in stitches. Pepi the clown, accompanied by his penguin, Scottish accordion virtuoso Lawrie Adam,* and actress and panto star Wendy Wayne (who became Mrs Dickie Valentine in 1968), completed an impressive line-up. The Musical Director was Hal Chambers.

* The pianist and composer of attractive light music, Louise Denny, was a member of the troupe until she damaged a foot and remembers with affection the kindness shown to her by Dickie Valentine that summer, and the prophetic advice he gave her that, as a talented pianist, she could become a foremost accompanist.

* It is said that whilst appearing with Ken Dodd at the Villa Marina he experienced a religious conversion – no doubt whilst waiting for his turn to get onto the stage! - and was ordained as a priest in 1982.

The 'One Night Stand' on Thursday 18th June featured Mr Acker Bilk and his Paramount Jazz Band. On Sunday 21st June Liverpool-born comedian, singer, actor and television host of several quiz shows, Jimmy Tarbuck, topped the bill, together with the composer of bright, catchy pieces, pianist and entertainer Joe 'Mr Piano' Henderson, the popular accompanist

and close friend of Petula Clark during the 1950s. Ronnie Aldrich and the Squads provided the musical interludes. The following Sunday, 28th June, Hylda Baker, one of the last female Northern music hall comediennes, was the main attraction. Small in stature, rotund yet spirited, she was as eccentric on stage as in her private life; her patter was replete with malapropisms ('I can say this without fear of contraception' and 'I'm not suffering from illuminations'), and catch-phrases like 'Be soon, I said be soon' and 'She knows y'know' addressed to her lanky 'silent' stooge Cynthia, normally played by a man. The supporting turn was The Strangers with Mike Shannon, who had recorded an obscure Lennon and McCartney song *One and One is Two* in 1964. Described as '. . . a forgettable . . . standard plodding Merseybeat number', it disappeared as quickly as the group.

Manfred Mann appeared for the 'One Night Stand' on Thursday 2nd July. The 1960s rock band was named after their keyboard player, and their lead vocalist at this time was Paul Jones. This was the year that their 5-4-3-2-1 became the new theme song for ITV's *Ready, Steady Go*; their biggest 'hit' *Do Wah Diddy Diddy* was recorded the previous year. On Saturday 4th July Ronnie Aldrich was recorded 'live' for the BBC Light Programme's BIG BROADCAST NIGHT. The following night, Sunday 5th July, the Bachelors, the successful trio of brothers from Dublin, and considered to be Ireland's first 'boy band', with many chart successes, appearances on various television shows and two Royal Variety Performances, entertained the audience in their easy-going style in songs such as *Charmaine*, *Faraway Places*, *Whispering* and their current 'hit' *Diane*. They would endure to celebrate over half a century in showbusiness.

The 'One Night Stand' on Thursday 9th July starred the Mojoes, a Liverpool group barely remembered for their 'hit' single *Everything's Alright*, which achieved a modest success that was never repeated. The Dave Clarke Five on the other hand, with twelve top 'hits' between 1964 and 1967 including *Bits and Pieces* and *Glad All Over* (which topped the Beatles' *I Want to Hold Your Hand* from the top of the UK singles chart in 1964), appeared on Sunday 12th July. Their 'Tottenham' sound was for a short period a serious rival to the Beatles' Mersey Beat sound. The Dave Clarke Five also achieved chart success in America, but split in 1970, re-formed, but disbanded in 1972.

Beat band Brian Pool and the Tremeloes, who made their name with covers of Buddy Holly and the Crickets and a UK number 1 'hit' in 1963 with *Do You Love Me*, had their 'One Night Stand' on Thursday 16th July. Despite a wide fan base and popularity in dance halls, the boy from Barking left the band in 1966. Jimmy Logan was the guest celebrity on Sunday 19th July, and on the following Wednesday, 22nd July, the BIG HIGHLAND NIGHT featured two bands: the Squads and the Glasgow Police Pipe Band. The 'One Night Stand' on Thursday 23rd featured Bob Miller and the Millermen, and on Sunday 26th Kathy Kirby and The Four Pennies were the headline act. The bubbly girl from Ilford, Essex, with the Marilyn Monroe 'Blonde Bombshell' look had been the resident dance band vocalist with Bert Ambrose, and was currently starring at the ABC Theatre, Blackpool, for the summer. Kirby was one of the biggest and highest paid stars of the 1960s, the resident singer on ATV's *Stars and Garters*, a show set in a fictional pub, whose biggest 'hit' was a cover of Doris Day's *Secret Love*, released the year before her triumphant appearance at the Royal Variety Performance. The Four Pennies,

from Blackburn, Lancashire, were a pioneering but short-lived band (1963-66) with one memorable 'hit': *Juliet*.

Yet another Liverpool Merseybeat group riding high in 1964, The Searchers, made a 'flying visit' for their 'One Night Stand' on Thursday 30th July. Their 'bright and tuneful' successes *Sweets for My Sweet*, *Needles and Pins*, *Sugar and Spice* and *Don't Throw Your Love Away* attest to their popularity in the wake of the Beatles' international fame. The Dave Clarke Five returned to the Colliseum on Sunday 2nd August, and on Thursday 6th August The Applejacks from the Midlands introduced Douglas to the 'Brumbeat' or 'Solihull Sound' with songs like *Tell Me When* and *Like Dreamers Do* at their 'One Night Stand'. Another star from *Stars and Garters*, Clinton Ford, topped the bill on Sunday 9th August, with a selection of novelty country and western style songs and romantic ballads, and undoubtedly his greatest chart success from 1962, *Fanlight Fanny*. Ford was a versatile entertainer who could not be easily pigeon-holed. He later retired to the Isle of Man and died in 2009! The supporting star was ventriloquist Dennis Spicer. Throughout August leading DJs Jimmy Saville's and David Jacobs – the presenter of BBC Television's *Juke Box Jury*, and one of the original hosts of *Top of the Pops* - presented their *Television Discoveries* show.

Fan-tastic scenes at the Palace Lido

The 'One Night Stand' on Thursday 13th August has passed into the story of popular music on the Island because that evening the Rolling Stones made their Douglas debut during their third British tour that year. The original allocation of five thousand tickets was increased to twelve thousand, and not surprisingly the Police were in attendance 'in view of the group's peculiar effect on their fans'. It was hardly a riot, but there was plenty of screaming from the crowd packed in like sardines, and some fans fainted and were passed over the heads of the crowd for medical attention. One member of the St John's Ambulance Brigade later recalled that, although lying on the floor after being attended to, young girls still managed to 'sit up and scream' before passing out again! One surviving photograph of this famous event shows a girl being carried by two policemen, with a police dog looking on in joyful anticipation that he might be called upon to attack someone that evening. The Stones sang thirteen songs, all covers, including *I Just Wanna Make Love to You*, *Walking the Dog*, *I Wanna Be Your Man*, *Carol* and *It's All Over Now*.

Two of the most enduring Liverpoolian entertainers of the age appeared as the season approached the end: Ken Dodd, together with the smooth country style Irish vocal quartet the Four Ramblers (who helped Val Doonican to the first rung of the ladder of his career), on Sunday 16th August; and Jimmy Tarbuck with the hugely popular Raindrops (Vince Hill had been a member of the group until he launched his solo career), on the 30th. On Sunday 23rd August there was a rare opportunity to hear two well-loved and highly respected artistes from the past, stylish veteran piano duettists Rawicz and Landauer, last heard at the Villa Marina in 1960, sharing the same bill with actor Derek Dene, with the Squads in support.

The Palace Gardens closed for the season on Friday 21st August, and from Monday 24th the Old Time Dance Festival got under way with Ivy Benson providing the music.

The final 'One Night Stand' on Monday 31st August introduced 'pop parodists' The Barron Knights, the five-piece comedy band and their current 'hit' *Call Up the Groups* in which they parodied their contemporaries the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Freddie and the Dreamers and the Bachelors.

The Squadronaires disbanded that year, and Ronnie Aldrich, a permanent resident on the Island since 1959, embarked on a career as a composer, arranger and pianist.

The smaller venues

The main event during the season at the Derby Castle was wrestling, and, from Sunday 21st June, Karma, who continued to mystify the holiday makers. At the Gaiety Theatre the *Happy Holiday Show* with Jay Martell and Stella Hartley drew large family crowds and delivered fun and games for all as it had done for decades.

Where there's swill, there's a way

The Big Show at the Crescent Pavilion began on Sunday 5th July and headlined the Merseybeat band from Manchester Freddie and the Dreamers, whose stage act was enlivened by the antics and eccentric wacky dance routines of resident clown, 5' 3" Freddy Garrity, he of the skeletal frame and horn-rimmed spectacles. Their biggest 'hit' was *You Were Made for Me* in 1963, but *Rolling Stone* Magazine was less than impressed, describing their act as 'Talentless idiocy . . . (and) a triumph of rock as cretinous swill'. The girl from Consett, Susan Maugham, shared the top of the bill and no doubt sang her most enduring 'hits' *Mama Do the Twist* and *Bobby's Girl*. She had earlier been the resident singer with the Ray Ellington Quartet, appeared at the Royal Variety Performance in 1963, and would later appear with Morecambe and Wise during the 1970s. Four in harmony, the Don Riddell Four, Everly Brothers sound-alikes, the Brook Brothers and 'the Irish Ted Ray', comedian Harry Bailey - whose act consisted of off-beat bizarre, patter-strewn violinistics - completed a colourful line-up.

White City on Onchan Head was open all day, wet or fine, throughout the season; at the Isle of Man Holiday Camp Jack Stone and his band, played for dancing every evening except Sunday. There were guest appearances from Jimmy Logan, the Don Riddell Four and 'your local favourites' the Vampires Rhythm Group on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. The Douglas Bay Hotel featured the Texas Rangers in the Texas bar, with Tony Jackson, 'Ace Guitarist'.

Cinemas

At the Regal, *The Bargee* with Harry H. Corbett as 'the Casanova of the canals', was all a bit 'Carry on up your Canal' in its blatant sexism. The cast included Ronnie Barker, Hugh Griffith and Eric Sykes, with small roles for Derek Nimmo, Una Stubbs and Richard Briers. A great 'Christmas' favourite, *Zulu*, a reasonably accurate portrayal of the events surrounding the defence of Rorke's Drift in Zululand in 1879, gave Michael Caine his first major film role.

Albert Finney starred in the bawdy eighteenth-century petticoat romp, *Tom Jones* at the Picture House, along with the epic historical drama that won seven Oscars, *Lawrence of Arabia*, which starred Peter O'Toole galloping through Hejaz and Syria on a camel during

World War I. Visually stunning and a reasonably accurate portrayal of historical events (if not of Lawrence himself), it remains highly watchable today.

Charlton Heston, Ava Gardner and David Niven starred in the American epic *55 Days in Peking*, an unauthentic re-telling of the events surrounding the siege of the foreign legation's compounds in Peking during the Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1901, was shown at the Crescent Cinema. The film fails to make clear who were the Boxers, and why were they rebelling, and save for the chance to identify the voice of Burt Kwouk (Cato in the Inspector Clouseau comedies) as an old man, it is barely worth watching. The worthy British war film about the RAF's fictional *633 Squadron* preparing for, and undertaking a bombing raid in Norway, is grounded by 'wooden acting and a hackneyed plot' but might be of interest today for aviation enthusiasts on a wet Saturday afternoon.

Peter Sellers in *Dr Strangelove*, Alfred Hitchcock's *Charade* starring Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn in the mildly steamy *Peyton Place* were shown at the Strand Cinema. At the Royalty, the 'comic fantasia with music, *A Hard Day's Night*, promoted as the Beatles' 'hilarious, action-packed' debut film, which charts thirty-six hours in the lives of the 'fab four' in the lead up to a television broadcast, drew large crowds, and was a financial and critical success.

1965

'See Naples and die? See Douglas and Live!'

At the start of the new summer season one enthusiastic reporter attempted to portray Douglas enthusiastically as '... the bright, bustling and beautiful Naples of the North (and) a hive of holiday fun behind its spectacular two miles crescent of sea front and fine sandy shore ... enjoy the Carnival revels ... the horse trams and soak up the sun on the beach or in the splendid sunken gardens'. He described the Villa Marina at the centre of the promenade as 'a comprehensive entertainment unit with bands and beautiful gardens'. Douglas Bay was frequently compared to the Bay of Naples in the local newspapers from the 1880s, even by some who had actually been there; the commentator also drew particular attention to the 'thoroughly modernised hotels and boarding houses', of which the Fort Anne Hotel, which enjoyed a commanding position overlooking the entrance to Douglas harbour and the sea terminal, recently re-opened following extensive and luxurious renovations, was recommended for those fortunate enough to be able to afford to stay there.*

*It, too, eventually fell into disuse due to the decline in the tourist industry and was eventually demolished in 1979.

1965 in a nutshell

The death of Sir Winston Churchill on 24th January resulted in his state funeral on the 30th; National Health Service prescription charges ended; Sir Stanley Matthews played his final game at the age of just over fifty; BBC Radio comedy *Round the Horne* was first broadcast; Liverpool won the FA Cup for the first time; the CSE (Certificate of Secondary Examination) was first introduced in schools; in July the former boxing champion Freddie Mills was found shot in his car and died the following day; Edward Heath became leader of the Conservative

Party; Corgi Toys introduced the James Bond Aston Martin DB5 into their range; *The Magic Roundabout* first appeared on BBC Television; the James Bond film *Thunderball* was released; Capital Punishment in England, Scotland and Wales was suspended, initially for five years; the theatre critic Kenneth Tynan said f*** for the first time on television; the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association was founded by Mary Whitehouse; John Fowles' novel *The Magus*, and Agatha Christie's Miss Marple mystery *At Bertram's Hotel* were published; Hugh Willingly-Eatitall (*sic*), chef to the natural world, and actor Stephen 'Banksy' Tomkinson were born; the nation bade farewell to the poet, essayist, playwright, literary critic and publisher, T. S. Eliot, and an even fonder one to Stan Laurel, who passed away quietly in his armchair in Santa Monica at the age of seventy-four.

A number of attractions were either inaugurated that summer, much improved or disappeared forever. One attraction much loved by residents and visitors alike despite initially being regarded as a 'speculative venture', the Curraghs Wildlife Park situated between Ballaugh and Sulby villages, was opened on Saturday 3rd July by the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Ronald Garvey and is still going strong. Among the first 'residents' was a baby elephant from Burma, llamas, monkeys, tapirs, Japanese deer, cranes and flamingos. Other inmates arrived by steamer shortly afterwards. Another idea floated that summer that did not come to fruition was a futuristic plan to put a 'roof' on Strand Street in Douglas.

In April the Manx Government purchased the Laxey Wheel for the sum of £5,000 from its long-term private owner and announced plans to fully restore this unique example of superb Victorian engineering. In June the first phase of the redevelopment of Douglas Holiday Camp was opened. Now renamed the Isle of Man Holiday Centre, the site boasted a range of luxury chalets and a large indoor swimming pool.

'Harmony in Concrete'

In July Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon paid a two-day visit to the Island; the streets and promenades were lined with thousands of people wherever they went during their hectic schedule. Whilst Lord Snowdon did a lap of the TT course, Princess Margaret opened the new Sea Terminal,* a project which had taken five years to complete. There was much praise for the terminal's spacious main hall which could accommodate 1,000 travellers, shops and other amenities including Harbour Board offices, a buffet and a third-floor circular restaurant seating one hundred and twenty diners.* The new terminal, with its futuristic 'three legs of Man' design, was awarded the British Travel Association's 'Come to Britain' award in October.

* The Victorian Sea Terminal, with its familiar clock tower, but limited facilities for the visitor, was demolished in 1961.

* It was known locally as the 'lemon squeezer'.

The Derby Castle, together with its Opera House, was demolished, and, in an attempt to attract new visitors to the Island, the Palace Coliseum (Theatre) suffered the same fate in order to make way for the Palace Hotel and Casino. The Palace Ballroom, now known as the Palace Lido, was granted a licence for gambling and presented high class Sunday night cabarets featuring a host of well-known stars.*

* High-tech laser discos became a feature of the 1980s, but the huge entertainment venue was closed in 1992 and demolished in 1994. Only the old opera house still survives as a cinema today.

The Villa Marina and Gardens

Ivy Benson and her All-Girl Band began what was to be their last summer season in Douglas on 5th June and received a warm and affectionate Manx welcome. 'Ivy Benson and her girls have been part of the Island's Summer Entertainment for many years and their popularity has proved itself . . . because (they) cater for all tastes in music from beat to ballad'.* The band was immediately catapulted into a busy schedule of appearances beginning with an afternoon concert at 2.30 in the Villa Marina Gardens on Sunday 6th, and further concerts each weekday afternoon, which included participation in the Bathing Beauty Contests on Wednesdays and the Talent Competitions on Fridays. The band played for dancing on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings until 11.30pm, and on Sunday evenings gave a popular Sunday Celebrity Concert.

In the Gardens from 10.30 - 12.30 each morning, Tony Barlow, having entertained the holiday makers in Rhyl the previous summer, entertained the crowds in Douglas on the Hammond Organ accompanied by Nigel Little on the drums and vibraphone. The youngest visitors were catered for at the Children's Theatre and Kiddies Corner where Uncle Roy and Auntie Betty entertained them with knockabout comedy and games.

There were morning dances on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays aimed at younger holiday makers, and Tuesday evening, strictly for teenagers, Teenbeat, with music from local group The Phantoms, and Sally and the Alley Cats*

Wednesday evenings were given over to international all-star wrestling matches.

* *Holiday News*, 05.06.1965

* A group of six girls from Ivy Benson's band led by Sally Sykes, vocalist, plus three guitars, drums and keyboard who first appeared in 1964. Their record *Is it Something That I Said?* gives a good idea of the appeal of this attractive and polished group.

The celebrity star on Sunday 6th June was the Canadian baritone with the film star looks, Edmund Hockridge, 'As tall and strong as a tree', whose imposing stage presence and manly voice in arias and songs from the worlds of opera and the musical stage made him much in demand as a concert artist in the years before Rock 'n' Roll began to dominate the musical scene, and ballad singers ruled the charts. His reputation in Britain was secure because he gave one thousand performances of Rogers and Hammerstein's *Carousel* in the demanding role of Billy Bigelow in London.

One of the highest paid double acts in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Jewel and Warriss, with their smart, savvy straight guy and loveable oaf personas matched by impeccable comic timing, were the guest comedians on Sunday 13th June. Essentially an old-time music hall act, these veterans of seven Royal Variety Performances, countless pantomime appearances, radio shows and films, their thirty-year partnership faded after the mid-1960s when variety and club work turned increasingly 'blue'.

The following Sunday, 20th June, the television magician of his time David Nixon beguiled the audience with his gentle humour and avuncular charm. Although he was not a great magician, he became a household name through his television appearances on *What's My Line* and *It's Magic*. His affable and warm personality earned him high audience ratings, and it's hardly surprising that he became a favourite on the pantomime circuit.

Bert 'Mr Guitar' Weedon, the highly respected guitarist's guitarist, soloist with the orchestras of Mantovani, Ted Heath and Cyril Stapleton, and the guitarist on countless 'hit' records, was the celebrity artist at the Popular Sunday Concert on 27th June.* His one-man show was admired by guitarists and lovers of superb, highly polished entertainment everywhere.

* His guitar instruction book *Play in a Day* quickly became a 'classic' and inspired John Lennon, George Harrison, Eric Clapton and Brian May.

The host of BBC's *Six-Five-Special* (1957-58), a panellist on *Juke Box Jury*, and since 1964, a regular presenter of *Top of the Pops*, DJ Pete Murray hosted Spin-a-Disc on Tuesday 29th June. Liverpudlian Billy J. Kramer and the Dakotas appeared on Sunday 4th July. Originally a Manchester backing band, the Dakotas were most associated with lead singer Kramer and had a string of 'hits' in the early 1960s before Billy J - always in the Beatles' shadow - faded along with the 'beat boom' and onto the nostalgia circuit. They are perhaps best remembered for their 1963 'cover' of the Beatles *Do You Want to Know a Secret*.

A Grand Welcome Dance with Ivy Benson and The Phantoms took place on Saturday 10th July, and the following evening, Sunday 11th, David Whitfield, the hugely popular singer of dramatic ballads, whose rise to fame via brief careers as a delivery boy, cement humper, coalman, and a spell in the Royal Navy was nothing less than extraordinary, received a rapturous welcome. His first break had been on Hughie Green's *Opportunity Knocks* which launched his variety career in the early 1950s, and he achieved palpable 'hits' with *I Believe* and *Cara Mia*. Like so many *balladeers*, he faded during the 1960s, although still a popular performer in cabaret clubs and on cruise ship circuits.

National institution in the making, DJ David Jacobs hosted Spin-a-Disc on Tuesday 13th. He was a stylish broadcaster and well known as the host of *Juke Box Jury*, and later *Any Questions*, where he established himself as a safe pair of hands and a reassuring, dignified presence as the programme chairman. The Phantoms and the Alley Cats were the support acts.

'Keep it Bright, Keep it Bright'

'Scotland's Favourite . . . risqué but never obscene', Lex 'Sexy Lex' McLean, the last of Scotland's great music hall comedians in the Harry Lauder tradition, attired in his characteristic cloak and top hat one minute, and flat cap and baggy trousers the next, was the star of the Sunday Celebrity Concert on 18th July. The Scots in the capacity crowd knew him through his BBC Scotland Television series *Lex and Lex Again*, but he won many new admirers that night with his engaging personality and genial patter.

Spin-a-Disc returned with Pete Murray on Wednesday 21st, and on Sunday 25th Chick Murray and Maidey, 'The Tall Droll and the Small Doll', appeared during Scot's fortnight. Sometimes billed as Maidie and Murray, 4'11" 'tiny' Maidey Dickson, his wife, played the accordion whilst

6'3" tall Chick 'sent her up', in his drawling Morningside accent in surreal wandering monologues displaying an off-beat view of the world, sometimes kilted and sporting his trademark tartan bonnet or 'bunnet'. The supporting turn was singer, comedian and actor Tommy Fields – the younger brother of Gracie Fields - who enjoyed a forty-year career in showbiz replete with world tours, summer seasons and pantomimes - he was an excellent Dame - throughout Britain. 'Charming and cheeky', but rarely slightly 'blue', he often appeared in tours of West End musical comedies.

Pete Murray returned on Tuesday 27th with another edition of Spin-a-Disc.

It was 'Merseybeat, beat, beat all the way' when Gerry and the Pacemakers appeared at the Villa on 1st August. They were the first group whose first three singles: *How Do You Do It, I Like It, You'll Never Walk Alone* reached number one in the UK Singles Chart. Their iconic *Ferry Across the Mersey* had been released the previous year. Despite success in Britain and America, the group disbanded in 1967.

It was the turn of Alan 'Fluff' Freeman to Spin-a-Disc on Tuesday 3rd August. 'A DJ who loved music', he had presented *Pick of the Pops* since 1961, and with his flamboyant, sunny personality, American style delivery and clichés like 'Greetings, pop pickers', he became one of the leading DJs of the times.

'The Wizard of Oz'

The Celebrity star on Sunday 8th August was the high-profile Ozzy light entertainer Rolf Harris. Singer-songwriter, television personality, artist and Royal portraitist, he leapt to exuberant fame on British television in 1954, introduced millions of viewers to the Didgeridoo and the Wobble board, and scored a Top 10 'hit' with *Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport* in 1960.* He made no less than four appearances at the Glastonbury Festival, and three on *This is Your Life*, and was an endearing, energetic and enduring entertainer. In the opinion of the critic A. A. Gill, Harris was 'remorselessly and screamingly "naff"' . . . and although 'he is a difficult man to hate . . . that doesn't mean we shouldn't try'.*

* The fourth verse with the lines *Let me Abos go loose Lou, let me Abos go loose*, caused offence even in 1964.

* Rolf Harris became a convicted paedophile and was jailed in 2014.

The Celebrity Concert Sunday 22nd August starred Susan Maughan, versatile and vivacious, and successful in the 1960s with her biggest 'hit' *Bobby's Girl* in 1963. She had been the resident singer with the Ray Ellington Quartet for three years and appeared on five occasions on the Morecambe and Wise show. The supporting turns included one-man-show, music hall style comedian and pantomime star Joe Baker, who had appeared in BBC Television's *Crackerjack* in the 1950s and had his own television show, the *Joe Baker Show*, in 1965.* Mike Hurst, a member of the Springfields in 1962, who went solo in 1963 and in 1964 formed The Methods with Jimmy Page, Albert Lee and Tony Ashton was a Country Rock style singer, guitarist and song writer, who by 1965 was producing records for other stars including Marc Bolan and Cat Stevens. The Slade Brothers, Canadian, but not brothers, were slick performers in a folksy style, who had moved to Liverpool in 1965 after hearing the Beatles, only to drift apart in 1966 to become song writers. Also appearing were The Phil Phillips Trio, who were

resident at London's The Talk of the Town and The Mirage(s) - possibly the '60s 'psychedelic' pop group whose best known single was *The Wedding of Ramona Blair* in 1967 - and The Four Macs, a Scottish group of entertainers. The compere for the evening was Alan Freeman.

* He once joked that in his early years 'I was sometimes so bad I joined in the booing'.

Pete Murray appeared again with Spin-a-Disc on Tuesday 24th August, and the end-of-season show on Sunday 5th September starred comedian, pantomime favourite and compere of summer shows Derek Dean, Franklin and his Doves, and a mindreading act, The Bewildering Zodiacs.

Palace Ballroom and Coliseum

New to the Palace Ballroom from 5th July in the wake of the Ronnie Aldrich Squadronaires' final season was Bob Miller and the Millermen, prominent during the 1950s and '60s as an instrumental band, well known at ballrooms throughout the country, and the resident band on the BBC's *Come Dancing*, *Six-Five Special*, and *Drumbeat* programmes, the last of which attracted five million viewers each week. They were joined by their star singer and guitarist Tony Crane, a song writer with the Merseybeats during 1964, whose voice strongly resembled Paul McCartney's; Rosanella, half English, half Italian, 'black hair and kinky clothes', a sixteen-year-old born performer brimming over with confidence; The Milltones; vocalist Dougie Arthur and local group, The Falcons.

The evenings entitled One Night Stand featured guest spots for groups such as The Searchers, Herman's Hermits, Johnny Kidd and the Pirates, Dave Berry and the Cruisers, Wayne Fontana and the Mind Benders, Manfred Mann, The Animals and The Ivy League. Three 'live' BBC recordings were also made that season which were open to the public; the ever-popular dance competitions continued to attract large crowds.

Since the closure of the Derby Castle, Sunday night wrestling came to the Palace Ballroom.

The One Night Stand on 10th June featured Cliff Bennett and the Rebel Rousers, a Rhythm and Blues, Soul and Beat Group, once pegged as 'a group to watch', who, like the Beatles, found fame in the Star Club, Hamburg. Their 1964 Top Ten 'hit' *One Way Love* failed to stop them being overtaken by the Beatles and Gerry and the Pacemakers, and they disbanded in 1969. The supporting instrumental backing group was The Tornados, who worked with Billy Fury amongst others and were considered rivals to The Shadows. Their biggest 'hit in Britain and America was *Telstar* in 1962, but they, too, were overtaken by the surge of Mersey Sound and disbanded in 1968 after a ten-week engagement at 'Mandys', the night club owned by Mandy 'He would say that wouldn't he' Rice -Davies in Israel.

Cockney Jess Conrad, the pop singer turned star of stage and film, appeared on 12th June with his two latest hits: *Hurt Me* and *Things I'd Like to Say*, supported by The Puppets, the backing group for The Ronettes, Gene Vincent, Vince Eager, Billy Fury, Marty Wide and others in the 1960s, and The Falcons. The Searchers were the guests on One Night Stand on 17th June; originally a skiffle group, then a Mersey Beat group in the wake of the Beatles, their 'hits' included *Sweets for My Sweet*, *Sugar and Spice*, and 'covers' of *Needles and Pins* and *Hippy Hippy Shake*. They were supported by The Falcons.

On 19th June, Gene *Be-Bop-a-Lula* Vincent, supported by The Puppets, was the charismatic Rockabilly star. American-born, he survived the infamous car crash which killed Eddie Cochrane in Wiltshire in 1960 and moved to Europe in 1961. His vocal style was breathless and sexy, but the swaggering, leather clad, greasy haired bad boy died young in 1971 from a combination of drug and alcohol abuse. On the 20th June there was a Celebrity Concert for Senior Citizens.

The Manchester beat rock group, Herman's Hermits, took the One Night Stand spot on Thursday 24th June. They were part of the Beatles-led 'pop' invasion of America and are remembered for their Number One UK Singles Chart 'hit' *I'm Into Something Good*. In support, the indispensable Falcons. Best known for *Shakin' All Over* in 1960, Johnny Kidd and the Pirates, complete with pirate costumes, eye patches and cutlasses and a colourful stage act, were the guest group on Friday 25th June, supported by . . . yes, you've probably guessed, The Falcons.

The Palace Coliseum was demolished during the season to make way for a new Casino - gaming rooms, late night cabaret and bar open until 5.00 am, and the one-hundred-bed Palace Hotel - and variety shows transferred to the Palace Theatre (the old Opera House), although the local newspapers were vague on this point. The last summer show at the Coliseum began on 5th July and starred Britain's Perry Como, the laid-back Irish crooner who radiated charm and relaxation, Val Doonican, in 'A Date with Doonican'. *The Val Doonican Show* began its twenty-one-year run on BBC Television that year and at its peak was watched by nineteen million viewers. His part of the show featured easy listening, middle-of-the-road classics and a sprinkling of Irish comic songs from the music hall era such as *Paddy McGinty's Goat* and *Delaney's Donkey*.* With his trademark cardigans and jumpers, rocking chair and guitar, 'he brought a warmth and homely charm to every song'. As one commentator observed, 'He was the antithesis to pop groups, preferring knitwear to nits'.

The supporting acts included twenty-three-year-old Jackie Trent, 'the Vera Lynn of the Potteries', a big-voiced singer-song writer, bubbling over with personality and part of the new wave of British female pop singers. She was hotfoot from a cabaret season in London and a spell with Lonnie Donegan in Great Yarmouth and sang her current 'hit' song *Where Are You Now?*, popular Irish songs and a Cole Porter selection.* The Four Jones Boys - signature song *The Whole Town's Talking About the Jones Boys* - a smart, clean-cut always reliable supporting act, but never top of the bill, presented an appealing stage act blending comedy and singing. They were popular in the 1950s and '60s but faded during the 1970s. At their peak, appeared frequently on Sunday Night at the London Palladium, *Comedy Bandbox* and *Club Night* with comedian Dave Morris, and toured with Ruby Murray.

The show's resident 'funster' Peter Norton, 'tall and goonish', formerly the comedy linchpin with Ronnie Aldrich and the Squadronaires, kept the show moving swiftly along, but the name we remember today is that of Les Dawson, billed as 'a great up-and-coming comedian . . . you'll love him'. His opening line was to welcome the audience to 'this exquisitely furnished kipper depot'; in the sketch 'This and That' he played ' . . . a very disgruntled man with a droll sense of humour and face to match'. Les remembered his season in Douglas fondly.* ' . . . I was bottom of the bill (near where dogs find it easy to urinate) on which Val Doonican was

the star attraction . . . salary £60 per week . . . show an instant success . . . nice, if cautious reviews . . . pushed my daughter around Douglas during the day . . . a turning point in my life . . . my first BIG TIME break . . .’

Also with an array of comical facial expressions was Don ‘one of a kind’ Dwight, impressionist and ‘master of dialect’, and the Fox-Miller Dancers, a troupe of boys and girls whose personnel changed frequently, who made their second appearance in Douglas. The Dollies, ‘four girls from Altringham’, who had turned down a French contract that year ‘because they wanted to stay on at school and take their A levels’, added a touch of glamour to the show. The backing group for the season was the Rudy Ammon Five, ‘swinging with lots of colour’, and fresh from several weeks as a resident band on the cruise ship circuit.

* Val Doonican was BBC Television’s ‘Personality of the Year in 1966, was rarely out of the UK Singles Charts during the 1960s and ‘70s and sold millions of records including fifty albums.

* Jackie Trent co-wrote some four hundred songs including the title song for *Neighbours* with her husband Tony Hatch. *Where Are You Now?* in 1965 was her biggest success, and she also wrote Val Doonican’s *What Would I Be Without You* the following year.

* See *A Clown Too Many*, Les Dawson, London, Elm tree Books, 1985.

‘It’s not your job to get the laughs!’

Sundays at the Palace Theatre included three appearances of Morecambe & Wise, who had transformed themselves from a quick-fire, crosstalk act into a new type of comedy act: no funny clothes and red noses, but tailored suits and plenty of amiable slapstick backed up by secure musical training. Not so much lead comic and straight man or idiot, as masterful one and foil who supplies the cues. Other stars included The Bachelors, who also appeared on three occasions, Jackie Rogers? and the superlative stage drunk of *Dinner for One* fame, Freddie Frinton,* a quiet and unassuming man off stage, who apparently played Bingo between performances. Another star appearing was Frank ‘I Remember You’ Ifield, the English-born Ozzy easy listening and country and western style singer with a ‘yodel’ in his voice, and a breezy, outdoor personality; he was the first singer to achieve three consecutive number one ‘hits’ in Britain and at one period his signature song was selling one thousand copies every minute! **Also starring was** Sandie Shaw, who had dreamed of becoming a singer while she worked at the Dagenham Ford Car plant before she was spotted by Adam Faith. The barefoot Essex girl became the ‘working class “it” girl’ of the swinging sixties whose career was launched with her ‘cover’ of Burt Bacharach and Hal David’s *There’s Always Something There to Remind Me* which became a number one British Singles Chart ‘hit’ in 1964. She regularly appeared on television’s *Top of the Pops*, *Ready, Steady Go!* and *Thank Your Lucky Stars*, and would win the Eurovision Song Contest in 1967 with *Puppet on a String*, that entry chosen by a public vote after trying out five other songs on The Rolf Harris Show.

* Between 1963 and 1966 he starred with Thora Hird in the BBC sit-com *Meet the Wife* as a down to earth plumber seeking ‘the quiet life’ constantly bickering with his snobbish, nagging wife. He was a fine character actor who died before his time in 1968.

The One Night Stand on Thursday 1st July starred Dave Berry and the Cruisers, with the Falcons in support. He was a ‘60s teen idol with a strikingly ‘spooky’ stage persona, and a mixture of

'hard R & B rockers and pop ballads' such as his signature 'hit' song *The Crying Game*. Wayne Fontana and the Mindbenders were the stars of the One Night Stand on Thursday 8th July. His biggest 'hit' was *The Game of Love*, but the group parted company in October that year, Fontana struggled to achieve further chart success, and faded onto the '60s revival circuit.

Morecambe and Wise were the stars of the Celebrity Concert at the Palace Theatre on Sunday 11th July, with Bob Miller and the Millermen providing the musical support. Bob Miller and his boys were on hand again on Thursday 15th for the One Night Stand with Unit 4 plus 2, a vocal harmony group of four to which were added a guitar and drums. *Concrete and Clay*, with its bossa nova beat and catchy chorus, was one of the best records of 1965, but they failed to come up with good follow-up releases and remained 'a one hit wonder (who) deserved better'. Pop music and culture was moving on faster than they could and they disbanded 1969.

The Bachelors were the guest stars on Sunday July 18th. The wholesome trio from Dublin enjoyed their greatest successes Britain, Europe and Worldwide in the 1960s with an easy listening pop style. They scored their biggest 'hit' in 1964 with *Diane* followed by *The Stars Will Remember* which was the most played Juke Box track in 1965. Their last big success came with a 'cover' of Paul Simon's *The Sound of Silence* the following year, and thereafter they continued to make theatre appearances until the 1980s. A Highland Ball with Bob Miller and the Millermen took place on Wed 21st in the Ballroom.

The One Night Stand in the Palace Ballroom on Thursday 22nd starred Manfred 'Do Wah Diddy Diddy' Mann, the English rock band who were prominent between 1962 and 1969. Manfred Mann was the keyboard player; the lead vocalist was Paul Jones. Their style has been described as 'eclectic, hybrid . . . with elements of jazz, blues, rock and folk'. In other words, pretty much everything going. Their 1964 'hit' *5-4-3-2-1* became the theme tune for ITV's *Ready, Steady Go!*

Frank Ifield with Bob Miller and the Millermen returned on Sunday 25th July, and the One Night Stand on Thursday 29th featured Them! described as a 'Hard-nosed' R & B Belfast band with a reputation for boorish behaviour who nevertheless launched the career of Van Morrison in 1964. Morrison's *Baby Please Don't Go* became a rock band standard; their first album entitled *The Angry Young Them* was released in 1965; Morrison quit in 1966 and they disbanded in 1972.

Heinz and the Wild Boys appeared on Saturday 31st July. Born Heinz Burt, the German-British, former bass guitarist with the Tornados, Heinz enjoyed a solo career with his backing group who included guitarist Ritchie Blackmore. By general consent his was not a great talent; even a rare success such as *Just Like Eddie* - a tribute to Eddie Cochran - and part of the largely futile drive to clone American-style Elvises and Buddy Hollys from British stock, failed to ignite the musical world. His peroxide Teutonic blond hair and leather jacket did not endear him to audiences, and his time passed quickly save for a few 'pop' nostalgia shows.

August, the peak month of the season, began on Sunday 1st August at the Palace Theatre with the return of Morecambe and Wise, followed on Tuesday 3rd by Spin-a-Disc hosted by Alan Freeman. The Animals, the five-piece rock band from Newcastle who featured Alan Price on

the keyboards, appeared in the Ballroom on Thursday 5th August. Their 1964 success with *House of the Rising Sun* revealed that Eric Burdon possessed a voice so gritty and gravelly it made Rod Stewart sound like a choir boy. The original line-up group split the following year.

Eden Kane, a pre-Beatles teen idol, together with the Downbeats, was the star of the One Night Stand on Saturday 7th August. He had enjoyed chart success with *Well I Ask You* and was often billed alongside the likes of Helen Shapiro, Adam Faith, Cliff Richard and Marty Wilde. He soon dried up, however, and moved to California and became a successful record producer. The special guests that evening were the American pioneers of folk and country rock, The Byrds, whose *Mr Tambourine Man* in 1964 became a smash 'hit'. Although their career at the top was comparatively short, their influence was felt for decades thereafter and their sound was 'absorbed into the vocabulary of rock'. The Bachelors returned on Sunday 8th August, and on the 10th, David Jacobs hosted *Spin-a-Disc*.

The American all-female rock band, Goldie and the Gingerbreads, formed in 1963 and the first all-female band to be signed by a major label, appeared on Saturday 14th August. They began touring throughout Britain after impressing Eric Burdon of the Animals, and became the support group for the Animals, the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, the Yardbirds and the Hollies. They fragmented in 1967-68 after some success with a handful of singles but left no lasting impression; Goldie (Genya Ravan) went on to form Ten Wheel Drive.

Sandie Shaw was unable to appear on Sunday 15th August due to the onset of laryngitis; her place at the top of the bill was taken by Rosanella, the resident vocalist with Bob Miller and the Millermen.

With the exception of the appearance of the Rolling Stones on Wednesday 8th September* there was little to get excited about as the end of the season drew near. There were Radio Caroline Dances with a guest DJ, and a One Night Stand starring singer, songwriter and actor Kenny 'You can never stop me loving you' Lynch, and the Boz People, formerly The Teatime Four, with a fusion of Jazz and Rhythm and Blues, on 21st August.

* A special sailing was laid on for 'Stones' fans, leaving Liverpool during the afternoon and returning at midnight. Their second Douglas 'gig' took place between two Los Angeles recording dates on Sept 5th and 6th and their 4th European tour which began in Münster on the 11th September. See photograph in *Holiday News* 04.09.1965.

Jess Conrad and the '60s instrumental backing band, The Revels, supported by The Falcons, topped the bill on Saturday 4th September. There was dancing in the Palace Ballroom to The Rudy Ammon Five with The Falcons as the supporting band from Monday 6th September. Morecambe and Wise appeared for the final time that season on 22nd September, followed by the Old Time Dance Festival with Johnny Wollaston and his Orchestra which attracted 3,500 visitors. The semi-final of Television Talent Discoveries with Jimmy Saville, and dancing to Bob Miller and the Millermen, took place on the 25th, with a Carnival Ball on the 26th, and the final of Television Talent Discoveries on Friday the 27th.

The smaller venues

The new look Douglas Holiday Centre, Victoria Road, formerly Douglas Holiday Camp boasted an indoor heated swimming pool, bowling alleys, amusement arcade, self-catering chalets,

bar and restaurants. 'Humour is the keynote . . .', said manager Ernest Godwin about the entertainment on offer, which included pianist Sam Thompson and organist Les Lane. There was dancing to The Fortune Tellers, a Manx Radio Disc Jockey Show and a Juke Box.

Entertainment from a twice nightly cabaret featuring Johnny Lee, guitarist, The Garland Sisters and Dick Francis was provided at the Castle Mona Hotel Casino - 'The first public Casino in Britain' - whose Gaming Room was open from 11.00 am until 5.00 am the following morning. Later, in the season the entertainment was in the capable hands of Tony Dowling, The Frank King Orchestra, Lena Storm and Jacqui Joy.

At the Gaiety Theatre at 8.00pm every night the *Holiday Showtime*, billed as 'The Happiest Show in Town', starred those 'genial giants' Dave and Joe O'Duffy and, of course, Stella Hartley and full cast. The supporting acts included husband and wife vocalists Sally and Larry Mandon; Scottish accordionist Billy Leslie; Gus Holloway and Pat, 'an act well worth seeing'; Scottish ventriloquist Ken Swan and his 'mate' McGhee, and Sue Garcia and The May Moxon Dancers who brought 'body' to the show. The piano accompanists were Frieda Standen and Harry Greene. An essential ingredient of the show every season was Stella's on-stage party with games and competitions for audience members including 'searching for ladders in stockings' and 'beer drinking' contests.

The Ray Norman Combo played seven nights each week at the Palace Hotel Casino; Take Four, 'the most versatile combo' including piano, percussion, guitars and saxophone entertained the guests at the Belle Vue Hotel, Port Erin; the Falcon Cliff Hotel presented The Blues Syndicate Quintet, and there was dancing to The Starliners at the Douglas Head Hotel.

With the disappearance of the Derby Castle, Karma now appeared at the Royalty Cinema* with his 'whirlwind show of Mirth and Mystery'.

The local cinemas showed some of the best known and high-grossing films ever made that year. The Picture House Cinema screened *My Fair Lady*; filmed in Yugoslavia, *Gengis Khan* starred Omar Sharif as the Mongol Emperor who conquered most of Asia, the Middle East and Europe was shown at the Strand. Despite colourful locations and costumes, it was underwhelming except in a few battle scenes. Julie Andrews 'umbrellaed' herself into the lives of the Banks family assisted by Cockney chimney sweep Bert in *Mary Poppins* at the Crescent; the first Bond film, *Dr No*, which established the iconic James Bond opening theme music, contained memorable scenes with a tarantula and actress Ursula Andress - although it's hard to recall who was the deadlier - was shown at the Regal, as was *Help!* the comedy drama featuring the Beatles, in their second screen outing, attempting to produce an album whilst saving Ringo from the clutches of a sinister cult. In endeavouring to capture the 'lunatic frenzy' and 'magical weirdness' of London before it became 'Swinging London', it left the critics wondering whether it *was* whimsical, genial or just plain dull.

* The Royalty Cinema was built for the Palace & Derby Castle Company on the site of the Pier Pavilion and became their head office. Live shows were put on during the summer seasons in 1950s and '60s and films during the winters. From the mid-1960s the venue was open only during the summer; the last films were shown in 1970, after which the building became a furniture store before being demolished in 1995.

And so . . .

The departure of Ronnie Aldrich at the end of the 1964 season,* and Ivy Benson in 1965, marks a watershed in the nature of musical entertainment in Douglas, and the end of my survey of summer seasonal entertainment in general on the Isle of Man. There were, of course, many splendid summer seasons to come, with appearances of famous bands, groups and variety entertainers, and the Island continued to attract good numbers of visitors notwithstanding the inevitable decline in overall visitor numbers which could not be arrested. The development of the short-lived and ill-fated Summerland complex might have contributed to a change of fortunes in the 1970s, but it was not to be. The era when the large-scale dance bands with accomplished and experienced musicians, playing skilful arrangements of the dances and 'hits' of the day would soon become the stuff of nostalgia, as would the spectacular summer revues with their large casts of singers, dancers, ventriloquists and so forth, headed by a well-known 'chief funster' or 'mirth maker'.

* The Squadronaires disbanded in 1964 and Ronnie Aldrich allegedly destroyed much of the band's music. The Squads were subsequently re-formed as the New Squadronaires by Harry Bence, and after this, re-formed again as the New Squadronaires Orchestra with the blessing of Ronnie's wife Mary.

The 1965 season's arrival figures amounted to a respectable 460,643, or 25,000 more than in 1964, and the highest recorded figure since the Fleetwood steamer route was discontinued in 1963. The thousands of holiday makers who for decades had responded to the call to 'Go Abroad to the Isle of Man' now chose to simply 'go abroad' for sun and fun in more exotic and colourful locations.

A holiday maker from Belfast, a veteran of twelve visits to the Island, wrote to the editor of *Holiday News* at the end of the 1966 season,* with a number of observations under the heading of: 'Those who don't want "Booze, Beat and Bingo" are overlooked!' He mourned the disappearance of the Palace Gardens and thought that the talent contests in the Villa Marina Gardens were a poor substitute. Wistfully looking back to the entertainment provided by Jack Leon, Joe Loss, Phil Moss and Ivy Benson 'when we were in the gardens every afternoon', he reported that 'we were in (only) once in a fortnight' during this season.

* *Holiday News*, 10.09.1966.

Commencing on Monday 12th September 1966 'Old Time Music Hall' returned to the Palace Ballroom - now reinvented as a licensed 'Clubland' - for one week, starring a cast of veteran entertainers from a bygone era headed by Hetty 'All the Nice Girls Love a Sailor' King, who first appeared in Douglas as a budding young male impersonator before World War I in the wake of the great Vesta Tilley; Cavan 'I'm only a strolling vagabond' O'Connor, the Nottingham-born First World War gunner who became Ireland's ambassador of song, and who had last appeared at the Palace Coliseum in 1950; Liverpool comedian Billy 'the Mirthquake' Matchett, born during the golden age of music hall and not seen in Douglas since 1954, and singer and dancer Margery Manners, 'the last of the great chorus singers', who last belted out the songs of yesteryear *à la* Florrie Forde at the Derby Castle Opera House in 1955. For that one night, it might have seemed as if the wheel of entertainment had turned full circle.

The next phase in the story of summer entertainment on the Island is not mine to tell. Perhaps another researcher with a knowledge of, and interest in the pop music scene in the 1970s, '80 and '90s, and memories of the last years of the Palace Lido, will take up the challenge.

Ramsey, July 2021.

