

# KIAULL MANNINAGH JIU

Jerrey Geuree 2021 January

MANX MUSIC TODAY

## DIY Manx music & dance - learn at home!

The Isle of Man has just gone back into lockdown at fairly short notice, so gigs and lessons are called off this month and everything is back online again! Luckily for our lovely KMJ readers, Culture Vannin already have lots of Manx music and dance resources online to try out and keep you entertained at home...

### MANX MUSIC

+ Learn the tin whistle with 'Feddan', try Manx tunes on the 'Fiddyl', and find more free resources here:

[www.manxmusic.com/education\\_page\\_92028.html](http://www.manxmusic.com/education_page_92028.html)

+ Play along with popular session tunes:

[www.manxmusic.com/learn\\_page\\_144681.html](http://www.manxmusic.com/learn_page_144681.html)

+ Create a family band with 'Cloie'!

[www.manxmusic.com/learn\\_page\\_469919.html](http://www.manxmusic.com/learn_page_469919.html)

+ **NEW Video music tutorials** (More coming soon from Laura Rowles and Phil Gawne...)

**Whistle tunes with Beccy Hurst:**

[www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/whistle-lessons-by-beccy-hurst-654273/](http://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/whistle-lessons-by-beccy-hurst-654273/)

**Whistle tunes with Peddyr Cubberley:**

[www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/whistle-lessons-by-peddyr-cubberley-645448/](http://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/whistle-lessons-by-peddyr-cubberley-645448/)

**Fiddle tunes with Isla Callister:**

[www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/fiddle-lessons-by-isa-callister-646571/](http://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/fiddle-lessons-by-isa-callister-646571/)

**Manx songs with Ruth Kegginn Gell:**

[www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/song-lessons-by-ruth-kegginn-gell-648552/](http://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/song-lessons-by-ruth-kegginn-gell-648552/)

**Guitar tunes with Pete Lumb:**

[www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/manx-guitar-lessons-606045/](http://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/manx-guitar-lessons-606045/)

**Learn wintry song, S'Feayr yn Oie with Ruth & Chloe:**

[www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/sfeayr-yn-oie-manx-song-lesson-656117/](http://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/sfeayr-yn-oie-manx-song-lesson-656117/)

+ **Learn songs from pdf sheet music & recordings:**

**Roie Mygeayt:** <https://soundcloud.com/culture-vannin/sets/roie-mygeayrt>

**Ree ny Marrey:** <https://soundcloud.com/culture-vannin/sets/ree-ny-marrey>

**Gow Ayrn:** [www.manxmusic.com/media/Education/Gow%20Ayrn%20Manx%20Music%20Edition%20B.pdf](http://www.manxmusic.com/media/Education/Gow%20Ayrn%20Manx%20Music%20Edition%20B.pdf)

+ **Improvise over the 'Kiaull Cooyl' backing tracks:**

<https://culturevannin.bandcamp.com/album/kiaull-cooyl>

+ **Sadly there will be no Manx Folk Awards** this year, but you can still try out the set pieces:

[www.manxmusic.com/learn\\_page\\_612064.html](http://www.manxmusic.com/learn_page_612064.html)



### In this month's edition...

- *Manannan's Winterfest, Hunt the Wren & the White Boys and more in photos*
- *New chart topping album from Mec Lir ~ Livewire!*

# Culture VANNIN

## MANX DANCE

+ Video dance tutorials with Grainne Joughin and Skeddan Jiarg:

[www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/manx-dance-lessons-579863/](http://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/manx-dance-lessons-579863/)

+ Keep fit & practice the Girls Jig or Chyndaa yn Bwoailley with these sound files:

<https://soundcloud.com/culture-vannin/sets/manx-dance-tunes>

## HISTORY

+ Different genres of Manx music, biographies & research: [www.manxmusic.com/history.html](http://www.manxmusic.com/history.html)

+ A little Manx music history and other fun stuff on this Manx history web app:

[https://manxhistory.com/app/#manx\\_history/9](https://manxhistory.com/app/#manx_history/9)

+ PhD Thesis on Manx traditional music and its revival since the 1970s:

[www.manxmusic.com/media/History%20photos/Revival%20of%20Manx%20Trad%20music%20PhD%20thesis%20C%20Woolley.pdf](http://www.manxmusic.com/media/History%20photos/Revival%20of%20Manx%20Trad%20music%20PhD%20thesis%20C%20Woolley.pdf)

+ Manx dance history thesis:

[www.manxmusic.com/media/History%20photos/MANX%20DANCE%20THESIS%20Cinzia%20Curtis%202006.pdf](http://www.manxmusic.com/media/History%20photos/MANX%20DANCE%20THESIS%20Cinzia%20Curtis%202006.pdf)

## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

Manx music quiz no. 1: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/HND67Q9](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HND67Q9)

Manx music quiz no. 2: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/v3w5qc7](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/v3w5qc7)

Manx music quiz no. 3: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/kgn5jkr](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/kgn5jkr)

Manx music quiz no. 4: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/gb7q2fj](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/gb7q2fj)

## LEARN MANX

+ Find out about Manx lessons and discover online resources: [www.learnmanx.com](http://www.learnmanx.com)

## CALENDAR CUSTOMS

+ Everything you need to know about the Manx Year: [www.culturevannin.im/manxfolklore/](http://www.culturevannin.im/manxfolklore/)

## ONLINE TRAD FIDDLE LESSONS with Isla Callister

Manx fiddle player Isla is currently back in the Isle of Man and is available to teach you traditional fiddle lessons online.

Isla graduated last year with a degree in traditional music from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and is now working as a freelance musician.

Isla recently produced some tutorial films for Culture Vannin, focussing on four Manx tunes:



[www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/fiddle-lessons-by-isa-callister-646571/](http://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/fiddle-lessons-by-isa-callister-646571/)

Find out more about Isla: [www.facebook.com/islacallistermusic](https://www.facebook.com/islacallistermusic)

She plays fiddle with Glasgow based band TRIP and she features on new single called Tha Fadachd orm Fhin by Scottish Gaelic singer Mairi McGillivray.

<https://open.spotify.com/track/5c8atQrvEhyzR71US7w1bg>

Isla also accompanies Mairi in this lovely music video: <https://youtu.be/56oG8-DATrw>

To enquire about lessons, contact: [islacallister@hotmail.com](mailto:islacallister@hotmail.com)



St Stephen's Day photos from Val Caine - St John's Hunt the Wren, the Lair Vane making a guest appearance at the cammag game, and post-cammag tunes in the Tynwald Inn.

## HUNT THE WREN 2020

North, South, East and West - hundreds gathered on St Stephen's Day around the Island to 'Hunt the Wren'!! (photos: Caroline H, Fiona H, Fiona Mc, Daphne C, Chloe W, James F, Paul S, David K, etc.)







**The Woodlands Wanderers!** Started by Chris Caine and Chris Callow, this group of friends have been doing Hunt the Wren in Douglas for over 30 years!



### **CHRISTMAS CONCERT in Ramsey**

Last month (20th December), young harpist Arabella Ayen and Ny Fennee musicians and dancers performed an enchanting concert of Manx music and dance:

Watch the concert on the Shennaghys Jiu FB page: [www.facebook.com/shennaghys.jiu](http://www.facebook.com/shennaghys.jiu)



Two superb teams of White Boys descended on towns around the Island this Christmas.

#### **THE WHITE BOYS TRADITION**

[www.culturevannin.im/manxfolklore/the-white-boys-505782/](http://www.culturevannin.im/manxfolklore/the-white-boys-505782/)

#### **DIGITISED ARCHIVE FILMS OF THE WHITE BOYS**

[www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/the-white-boys-1990s-613697/](http://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/the-white-boys-1990s-613697/)

## A great Manx poet in print at last

The work of one of the Isle of Man's most important poets, Paul Lebedzinski, has been printed for the first time. 'Until the Manxmen are driven away: The selected poems of Paul Lebedzinski' is the first time that the poet's work has appeared in book form, despite his work taking on legendary status in the 25 years since his untimely death at the age of only 43 in 1995.

A much-loved character, Lebedzinski was the son of a Polish Air Force pilot stationed at Jurby, and was born and raised in Ramsey amongst his Manx family and community. By the 1970s, then in his 20s, Paul began to gain a reputation for his thrilling performances of poetry in pubs and gatherings around the Island. He went on to create a body of work that is amongst the most provocative of all Manx literature.

**READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE:**

[www.culturevannin.im/news/a-great-manx-poet-in-print-at-last-654592/](http://www.culturevannin.im/news/a-great-manx-poet-in-print-at-last-654592/)

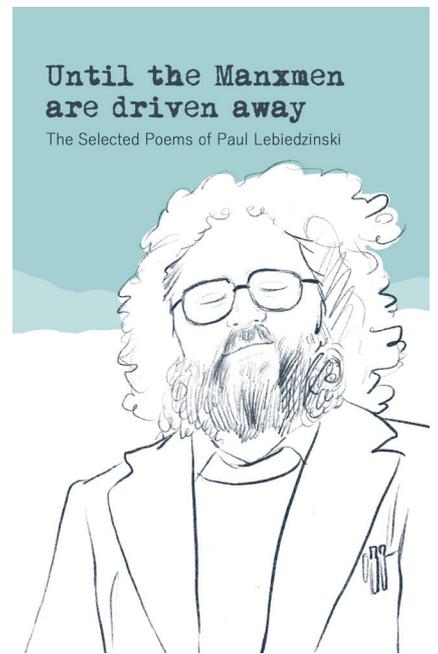
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'Until the Manxmen are driven away: The selected poems of Paul Lebedzinski' is available from bookshops around the Island priced £8.50, inc. [www.bridge-bookshop.com](http://www.bridge-bookshop.com)

Digitised recordings of Paul made between 1976 and 1988 include his best-known and most significant works, including 'Lambfell Chapel' and 'Colonel Pimp'. It was originally released as a cassette tape by Culture Vannin in 1998. LISTEN HERE:

[www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/audioarchive/six-foot-under-the-poems-of-paul-lebedzinski/](http://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/audioarchive/six-foot-under-the-poems-of-paul-lebedzinski/)

*The poetry book was launched in the Mitre Hotel, Ramsey in December with readings, memories and anecdotes, and musical contributions from some of those who remembered Paul. [photos: Val Caine]*



Manannan's Winterfest no.3 held at the Gaiety Theatre, 11 Dec 2020.

Amazing photography of the sell-out show by Vannin Photos: [www.facebook.com/VanninPhotos](http://www.facebook.com/VanninPhotos)





WHAT A LINE-UP! Performers included David Kilgallon, Malcolm Stitt, Jamie Smith, Dot Tilbury MBE, Geoff Corkish, Gareth Moore, Lava, Musicale, The Deemsters, The 'World Famous' White Boys, Ivelina Georgieva, Onchan Silver Band, The Reveillettes, Fraser Rowe, Daisy Divers, Jo Callister and Little Manx!



Christmas medley from Val Caine: Perree Bane performing for Arts & Culture night in the Corrin Hall, Peel; Matt Kelly at the Victorian Christmas at the Grove Museum in Ramsey, & musicians playing at the Illiam Dhone ceremony.

## Let's cut off the fiddlers' head!

The 6th January was Twelfth Day, the final day of the traditional Manx Christmas period - the Kegeesh Ommidjagh ('Foolish Fortnight'). After two whole weeks of no work but much partying - normally with much dancing and jough (ale) - they finished off with one final party, in which some odd customs took place, including 'Cutting off the Fiddler's Head'. This is described brilliantly in the 1730s by George Waldron:

"On Twelfth-day the Fiddler lays his head in some one of the wenches' laps, and a third person asks who such a maid or such a maid shall marry, naming the girls then present one after another, to which he answers according to his own whim, or agreeable to the intimacies he has taken notice of during this time of merriment. But whatever he says is as absolutely depended on as an oracle; and if he happens to couple two people who have an aversion to each other, tears and vexation succeed the mirth. This they call Cutting of the Fiddler's Head, for after this, he is dead for the whole year."

[www.isle-of-man.com/manxno.../manxsoc/msvol11/p40.htm](http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxno.../manxsoc/msvol11/p40.htm)



There is a suspicion that this might be related to a longsword dance known elsewhere (shown wonderfully here: [https://youtu.be/HCpXzn\\_Kiww](https://youtu.be/HCpXzn_Kiww), which links back to the sword dance of the White Boys. This tradition has been linked to a dance, and the tune, Mylecharaine's March. So perhaps the theme-tune for the 6th should be this by Barrule:

<https://youtu.be/TBFPlgCWLh8>

## Watch out, the Laair Vane is out...

On this final day for fun, everyone would come together for one final party, at which the Laair Vane would make an appearance...

A. W. Moore describes this 'White Mare' in his 1891 'Folklore of the Isle of Man':

"It would seem that these entertainments were usually held at a public-house [...] the whole party sat down to supper [...] During the supper the laair vane, or white mare, was brought in. This was a horse's head made of wood, and so contrived that the person who had charge of it, being concealed under a white sheet, was able to snap the mouth. He went round the table snapping the horse's mouth at the guests who finally chased him from the room, after much rough play."

More on the Laair Vane tradition (including a complete PDF of all historical references) is available here:

[www.culturevannin.im/manxfolklore/laair-vane-610609/](http://www.culturevannin.im/manxfolklore/laair-vane-610609/)

Culture Vannin is delighted to report that the Laair Vane is enjoying a come-back in the Isle of Man at the moment. There was an impromptu mare out last year, which was out again this year, with an additional one attached to one of the White Boys groups.

And, if you were at the Tynwald Inn after Cammag, you would have seen ANOTHER Laair Vane which you will be seeing a lot more of in the near future...!





## Welcome to The Listening Calendar!

This is a resource which started life as a project by music teacher Heather Daykin for her school community, and is now shared free across the Isle of Man and beyond as a means to support both teaching and enjoyment of a wide range of music linked to different events and observances.

There is a particular focus on including Manx artists and their music wherever possible, as well as guest artist videos made by local musicians alongside those from further afield.

For Manx schools, the monthly supporting calendar file is available free on the Manx Curriculum *ItsLearning* page in addition to being sent out by email monthly.

These are challenging times for us all, so the hope is that this calendar will provide you with a little musical escapism, especially now when it is much needed!

Contact Heather via the FB page to find out more: [www.facebook.com/thelisteningcalendar](http://www.facebook.com/thelisteningcalendar)



## Manx Folk Awards cancelled

The 2021 Manx Folk Awards will not be going ahead. Organisers at DESC & Culture Vannin hope to instead feature recordings of youngsters performing online or on the radio. The set pieces are still online if anyone would like to try them out or make their own choices:

[www.manxmusic.com/learn\\_page\\_612064.html](http://www.manxmusic.com/learn_page_612064.html)

?siht si enut xnaM tahW  
 WHAT IS THIS MANX TUNE?!!!  
[https://youtu.be/DWD\\_22O8dT8](https://youtu.be/DWD_22O8dT8)

Manx choir Cliogaree Twoaie sang Gaelic carols around Ramsey on Sat 5th December.

- • • • •
- **Youtube/Soundcloud/ pdf corner!** •
- Watch Henry Bloom Noble School year 5 and 6 singing and signing "Oikan ayns Bethlehem" with special guest singer •
- Ruth Keggan at St Georges Church, 15/12/20. •
- <https://youtu.be/LeUQzkKDNUl> •
- • • • •

# kiauli noa



## Livewire - chart topper

The NEW album from Mec Lir!  
Released December 2020.

1. Repeal the Union
2. Woodstock Lenny
3. Flashback
4. Väsen
5. Arrane Oie Vie
6. Chase the Ace
7. The Ram
8. Earthbound
9. Palm Bay (all day)

Available as a physical audio CD or digital download (MP3) £8.00 – £12.00:

[www.meclir.com/buy/livewire/](http://www.meclir.com/buy/livewire/)

**Livewire made it to NUMBER 1 in the iTunes World music charts! (11 Dec 2020)  
AND number 65 in the main iTunes album charts too!**

## Malew Baby! Records

**Malew Baby! Records** launches in January 2021. Born out of 'lockdown boredom' the dinky label based in Castletown can be found at [malewbabyrecords.bandcamp.com](http://malewbabyrecords.bandcamp.com)

With Manx music in general on the up, the label hopes to throw out material from bedroom dj's, alternative music, dance and folk fusions, Punk Rock, Manx language music and general attitude driven IOM gems!

A monthly Manx alternative music show also broadcasts once a month on Mixcloud

[www.mixcloud.com/MalewBabyRadio](http://www.mixcloud.com/MalewBabyRadio) with a showcase for Manx based material that 'crosses their path': a multi-genre operation, the label contains a fair splattering of the Manx language!

Initial bands and projects range from the trancey Malew Baby!.. to..

Ashlish's industrial soundscapes... DJ Fella's Old school Manx Hip-Hop... Soulatio's Northern Soul dancers... Dooninney Spoar's space rock concept album... Brochelilley's Manx countryside folk-fusion...  
*Physical copies of CD's, Waxings and even cassettes are planned! Enjoy The Ride!!! Malew Baby!*

Info: [malewbabyrecords@gmail.com](mailto:malewbabyrecords@gmail.com)

<https://www.mixcloud.com/MalewBabyRadio/malew-baby-radio-pilot-show-13122020/>

<https://malewbabyrecords.bandcamp.com/album/dooninney-spoar-dooinney-spoar>



# ISLAND UTOPIAS

Music by Matthew Warren, based on Manx folk melodies

## An art/music/film journey imagining what a better future might look like.

A combination of cut-up interviews with the public carried out during Covid19 Lockdown, layered with visuals of artists creating works inspired by these voice collages, accompanied by newly-composed piano pieces complimenting the themes and ideas of each of the 12 parts.



Together they create a mesmerising experience which transports us into new spaces of thought and seeing.

Created by Sarah Mercer, the idea started at the beginning of 2020, with interviews with people from all walks of life, re-imagining what they thought an ideal future for the Isle of Man might look like. Over lockdown these took new life and they were cut up into themed sound collages which were then given out to twelve of the most exciting artists in the Isle of Man today. They each made a piece of art reflecting on the words and created a short film of their process.

Over the top of this has been added new themed compositions by Matthew Warren, especially created for this collaboration, interweaving traditional Manx music with other subtle links, perfectly augmenting the mood of the other elements of the film.

The result is an experience unlike anything else you will ever likely have seen... Artists featured: Karolina Pawlowska; Hannah Radcliffe; Rebecca Odessa; Will Morris; Daniel Price; Bethany White; Ellie Baker; Anna Clucas; Betty Laurincova; Collette Davies; Billy Redgrave; Janet Lees.

### Music by Matthew Warren

Additional music by Scott Buckley, Andy Virgil North & Glastyn. This film was produced by Sarah Mercer / Culture Vannin in 2020 and premiered to a sold-out Erin Arts Centre in September 2020.

<https://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/island-utopias-650064/>

**NEW SINGLE FROM A STONE'S THROW**  
A Stones Throw 'Young Ones' single and video released end of 2020.

Track Recorded at Ballagroove Studio - Isle of Man. Filmed and edited by Geoff Court.

<https://youtu.be/5CUrhPSui-4>

Tim Price's lovely arrangement of this variant of the traditional carval, Oikan ayns Bethlehem was selected as one of the IOM Arts Council Christmas Creatives advent calendar dates:  
<https://youtu.be/ol62D3zjLM>

# Harrish y Cheayn - Across the Sea

Manx music and dance lives on in western Massachusetts! Will Quale tells us; "Though dormant throughout the pandemic, we emerge from slumber like the myrrh on Old Christmas to dance with the wren cage on St Stephens Day. It has to be a very socially distanced Gorse Sticks here: no holding hands allowed!"

The dancers performed a socially-distant Gorse Sticks instead of the extremely-undistanced Hunt the Wren! Benjamin Coan-Nixon and Rebecca Mae, who visited the Isle of Man in 2013 with Will and their dance team, And Sometimes Y, danced before the magnificent wren-cage made by fearless leader David Nixon.



## Vaughan Williams Memorial Library - Library Lectures 2021

*A new series of EFDSS Library Lectures kicks off in February, welcoming four fantastic speakers who will guide you through fascinating topics around folk song and dance. All lectures will be taking place online.*

- Folk choirs: Their Origins and Contribution to the Living Tradition by Marilyn Tucker and Paul Wilson
- Wednesday 3 February, 7.30pm
- Sweet and Ayr Activity: The Vernacular Dances of England c.1650 - 1700 by Anne Daye Wednesday 24 February, 7.30pm
- Folk Arts, Blackface and Race: a conversation with Nate Holder and Shzr Ee Tan Wednesday 24 March, 7.30pm
- Maud Karpeles, Adventurer and Folksong Collector: A Reconsideration of her 1929 and 1930 Newfoundland Field Explorations by Anna Guigne Wednesday 28 April, 7.30pm

[www.vwml.org](http://www.vwml.org)

## Celtic Connections 2021 programme announced

There's only one week to go until the festival kicks off, and we're marking it by announcing the full programme schedule. Across 19 days, the festival will present over 30 online performances between Friday 15 January and Tuesday 2 February 2021.

If you've not yet purchased your festival pass, now is the time to do it. Or, if you only want to see a couple of artists, there is now the option to purchase tickets for individual shows.

Each night's online concert will show an ambitious line-up of various performers, starting with our spectacular opening night concert featuring sets from some of the very best musicians on both the Scottish and international music scenes. 15 Jan - 2 Feb 2021

[www.celticconnections.com/](http://www.celticconnections.com/)

# RESEARCH NEWS

## SOME MONA DOUGLAS CORRESPONDENCE (1937 & 1941)

(1)

FLORENCE MOORE TO MONA DOUGLAS (1937)

1, Albert Terrace, | Onchan, | Isle of Man  
17/9/37.

Dear Miss Douglas,

At the General Meeting of the F.D.S. on Monday the class were entirely in favour of keeping our night to Monday. The Committee elected for the coming year is the same as last year with the addition of Miss Griffiths –Yourself, A. I. Caine, M. Conde, M. Lace (junior), J. Miller, K. Moore, S. Taggart, M. Williamson, & myself as Sec. Treas. etc.

As you will see by my notice I have been successful in obtaining Raphael Road Gym for our classes.

The Meeting unanimously wished me to write to you and to express our very real thanks and gratitude for your selfish attendance and teaching last winter. This is not merely a matter of form we really do appreciate all that you have done for us and we realise what it must have meant to you—a real sacrifice, to stay down in town so late on winter nights when you have such a long and difficult journey home; and again we wish to thank you for making it possible for us to benefit from Miss Jones' visit.

And remember won't you that any night you care to stay in town I shall have a bed ready for you.

Yours very sincerely, | Florence Moore  
[Typescript with signature]

(2)

MONA DOUGLAS TO [EDITH] DAVIS (1941)

20th November, 1941

Dear Miss Davis,

I am sending you herewith a copy of the dance notation of Peter-O Tavy, and am glad that you think of doing some of the Manx dances again. Unfortunately, however, I have no music beyond the air, which you say you already have. Either P.L.S., Nora or myself always used to vamp an accompaniment for most of the dances in the Ramsey days, and I think that will have to be your solution, too! Actually, Mr. Foster has done arrangements of all these dances, but they are not yet published and won't be until after the war, I'm afraid. That I have not got down in this notation of the dance, I see, is the very slight honour to partners which concludes each figure before resuming the body movement—I believe it was left out so that it should not be exaggerated, but it will have to go in somehow before the thing is printed, as it is rather characteristic of the dance, but can be more easily shown than explained verbally. Probably you will remember it, having done the dance before. The final honour, of course, is a more decided affair.

Did you hear that they have had a bomb on Cecil Sharp House? It's an awful mess! I think it would be nice if, sometime next year, say, our dancers over here could get up a combined effort to raise some money for their rebuilding fund, don't you?

Yours sincerely, | Mona Douglas  
[Typescript with signature]

(1) Letter from Florence Moore to Mona Douglas, 17 September 1937, (2) Letter from Mona Douglas to [Edith] Davis, 20 November, 1941. MNHL, MS 09545, Mona Douglas Papers, Box 19, [FOLDER] Manx Folk Dance Society.

STEPHEN MILLER RBV

# The Double Life of Ralph Williams

by  
Maurice Powell

Alas, dear reader, this is not one of Sherlock Holmes' unpublished cases, although there is a mystery here - albeit a modest one - and a twist at the end. Just before Christmas 2020 my friend and colleague Charles Guard MBE came to lunch and brought with him a package containing two collections - one of poems, the other of musical pieces - for me to examine purely out of interest. This is the tale they revealed.

'A great, unselfish spirit'

Ralph Williams was born in Paddington, London, in 1882, the son of Joseph and Emily Williams, and by 1911\* was living in London at number 4, Sutton Court Mansions, Chiswick, with his wife Dorothy\* and five-year-old daughter Eileen and described as a 'clerk' in a music publishing business. In fact, he was a partner in the music publishing company Joseph Williams & Son of 32, Great Portland Street, London, founded in 1808. The company was most active between 1840 and 1960 and published music by several notable British composers including Balfe, Cowen and Mackenzie during the Victorian age, and later Elgar, W. H. Squire, William Hurlstone, Yorke Bowen, Adam Carse and Thomas Dunhill, and was eventually acquired by the much larger Stainer & Bell.

\* England Census

\* Ralph Williams and Dorothy Mary Hogg were married on 3rd January 1903 in Richmond, Surrey.

In 1923 the family moved to the Isle of Man, having been regular visitors for some years, and resided in Orrisdale. The Williams' settled comfortably into a quiet life of the north of the Island, well-integrated into the local community, and eventually moved to Beach Cottage, Ballure Road, Ramsey, their home until they left the Island after World War II. For many years Ralph Williams was the Treasurer of the Bishop's Chapel, and the couple were much involved in supporting Ramsey Cottage Hospital to which, on a number of occasions, they donated £1 1s.\*

\* Ramsey Courier, 22.10.1925.

Two years after their arrival, in August 1925, their daughter Eileen was married to Mr Denis Norwood at Bishops Court Chapel in a service presided over by the Right Reverend, the Lord Bishop. The couple honeymooned in Wales and subsequently set up home in York where Denis Norwood was on the staff of St. Peter's School.

In February 1947 a play, *Tony Draws a Horse*, was presented by a local dramatic society in Ramsey, produced by a Miss Spencer, through the auspices of Ralph Williams who, in some way, made the production possible through his London connections.

In May 1947 Beach Cottage was put up for sale for the sum of £6,500.\* In June Mrs Williams was presented with a radio by the Girls' Friendly Society in recognition of her work as the Society's Diocesan Secretary for twenty years. One month later they bade farewell to their 'many kind friends' after twenty-four years on Island and moved to the popular seaside town of Lytham on Lancashire's Fylde coast.

\* The advertisement in the Ramsey Courier described the property as consisting of 24 x 14 feet lounge with inglenook fireplace, a study and four bedrooms, and a sun terrace with private steps leading to the foreshore.

Ralph Williams died at the hospital, Lytham, on 3rd Feb 1948. His obituary\* was full of praise for 'a more likable and generous personality it was not possible to meet', and described him as 'a man of lofty ideals', whose 'gentle and sympathetic features' and self-effacing personality endeared him to all. 'No deserving charity ever appealed to him in vain'. He was also well-liked by local young people as he frequently carried in his pocket hand-made toys which he would give to them in the street. 'Music, tennis and fishing' were his joys in life'. He also wrote music under the nom-de-plume Ralph Raymond, including vocal pieces with words by Maud

Cunningham, whose verses were well-known in Ramsey due to their frequent appearance in the Ramsey Courier.

\* Ramsey Courier 06.02.1948

We first hear of Maud Cunningham in 1933 when the Ramsey Courier published a poem entitled Life's Problem in the Friday 3rd March edition. For more than a decade several further poems appeared in the Courier, and in February 1938, the full text of a one-act play entitled The Stranger, with a cast of eight and set in a village shop and post office. In January 1939 the Ramsey Courier published the following brief appreciation of the poems: 'We have received many expressions of appreciation of the charming verses which appear in the Courier from time to time over the nom-de-plume "Maud Cunningham". These are written by one who has been engaged in lyric writing for a good many years and is now resident locally'. No poems appeared between April 1940 and October 1945; the last, Dear Old England, appeared in November 1946:

*Some say that dear old England is going fast to blazes,  
You've only got to look around it's written on folks faces.*

There are rueful references to the Government of the day, taxes, the T.U.C., the forty-hour week, and is somewhat despairing in tone rather than ironic: 'They haven't taxed the sunshine yet . . . laughter costs us nothing there's no purchase tax to pay', and the final lines exhort everyone to:

*Do away with all suspicion . . . malice . . . envy . . . greed,  
Substitute a Christian outlook that is what we need.  
If everyone would only try to work towards this end,  
Then surely dear old England would soon be on the mend!*

However, the obituary of Ralph Williams referred to earlier revealed a significant piece of information that may have come as a surprise to many, namely, that he and 'Maud Cunningham' were one and the same person, and thus he was the author of the popular poems! Thus, another small stitch is added to the vast tapestry that is the story of musical culture on the Isle of Man.

Here is a brief description of the two collections:

The first is a small ring-style scrap book with a loose sheet inscribed 'Given to me by Ralph Williams Great Granddaughter herself now 70!' The book contains several printed and typed poems, and pencilled drafts or sketches of others, including a series of eight entitled 'Nursery Nonsense', and a short story entitled 'Little Lad', all by 'Maud Cunningham'. Some poems are annotated; none are dated, and none are Manx in flavour or subject matter. There is one large wedding photograph, presumably of Mr and Mrs Ralph Williams.

The second item is a large folder containing an unfinished pastoral dramatic piece (whimsical, a la Gilbert and Sullivan, or perhaps more akin to British Musical Theatre c. 1920 in style) with songs, choruses and dances with piano accompaniment entitled A Manx Maid, with music by 'Ralph Raymond', and words by 'Maud Cunningham'. The small cast includes two lovers (possibly farming folk), the Captain of the Parish, a jury and a jury foreman. There is no spoken dialogue extant; there are a number of loose drafts and sketches; the folder bears the name Joseph Williams Limited; a sticker on the front cover reads: A Manx Maid, rough copy of music, lyrics etc. None of the manuscripts are dated.

Both collections are now deposited in the archives of Culture Vannin. Perhaps at some time in the future someone will take the time to examine the collections in detail, index and evaluate them, and perhaps even perform some of the individual musical numbers.

Ramsey, December 2020

## THE DANCES - Excerpt from '...while the others did some capers': the Manx Traditional Dance revival 1929 to 1960:

### 1. Rinkaghyn Vannin

#### 1.3 Hunt the Wren

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

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



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

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

Over the next twenty years the dance was referred to in a number of papers and articles by Douglas and as such does not change in nature. In most descriptions it is a progressive ring dance, formerly ritual but

now a children's game, the bush having disappeared and the spare girl just intent on finding a man to dance with.

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

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

By Cinzia Curtis 2006

[Photo of St Johns Hunt the Wren 2020 by Val Caine]

#### READ FULL THESIS:

[www.manxmusic.com/media/History%20photos/MANX%20DANCE%20THESIS%20Cinzia%20Curtis%202006.pdf](http://www.manxmusic.com/media/History%20photos/MANX%20DANCE%20THESIS%20Cinzia%20Curtis%202006.pdf)

### “UNTIMELY MERRIMENT AND PROFANE REGARDS” THE OIE’L VERREY (1827)

In this festive time of Christmas much feasting amongst farmers, takes places all over the country, particularly at the North, where the rites of hospitality continue to be performed with hearty good will. There is one custom, however, which we deplore, and that is the keeping up of the ancient Feillvary, or Christmas eve in the country Churches. Crowds flock to witness the usual decoration of evergreens with which our places of Worship are hung, to see the lights, and to hear the carols which untutored peasants sing. The vigil is in itself beautiful for its solemnities—were it not that the inconsiderate and the untaught convert the occasion into untimely merriment and profane regards. It is difficult to stem the torrent of ignorant licentiousness which reigns in the minds of the unlettered clown, who too often converts the solemnities which ought to remind him of greater objects and excite his ardent hopes to a happy futurity, into objects of a more earthly and sensual nature. We understand that from the increasing irreverence and abuse of this ordinance on the last Christmas-eve, owing, doubtless, to an increase of immoral sentiment among the people, several of the Clergy have determined to discontinue these nocturnal festivities. “In this festive ....” *Manks Advertiser* 27 December 1827: [3]c.

“Untimely merriment and profane regards” fulminated the writer of the piece as regards the Oie’l Verry which had just taken place that year. And there was more to condemn, namely a “torrent of ignorant licentiousness” that was certain to lead to “earthly and sensual” happenings—in other words, good-hearted fun and merriment all round as the order of the evening, the very purpose of the Oie’l Verry itself with the onset now of Winter. It had never been a time for “solemnities” but was now coming under threat, either to be reformed or simply discontinued.

STEPHEN MILLER RBV

# TRANSCRIPTION OF THE MONTH

see [www.manxmusic.com](http://www.manxmusic.com) for more printable pieces of Manx music

Manx musician, David Speers, was a guest tutor at the Bree youth session last month, and the students had a jam with this adaption of an old (untitled) Manx jig from the Clague/Gill Collection. Sometimes the melody is sung to the words "Lhig y Bullad", more associated with Juan Jaggad Keir. Whistle finger numbers added. Give it a try!!

## Lhig y Bullad Jig

Manx trad.  
B tune by David Speers

Musical notation for the Lhig y Bullad Jig, featuring four staves of music in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (D major) and a 6/8 time signature. The notation includes fingerings (numbers 1-5 and 6') and chord markings (A, D, G, E) above the notes. The first staff has a key signature change to one sharp (F# major) for the second half. The second staff has a key signature change to two sharps (D major) for the second half. The third and fourth staves have a key signature change to one sharp (F# major) for the second half. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

## Lhig y Bullad Jig - long notes

arr. C. Woolley 2010

Musical notation for the Lhig y Bullad Jig - long notes, featuring four staves of music in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (D major) and a 6/8 time signature. The notation consists of long notes with fingerings (numbers 2, 6, 5, 6, 3, 2, 2) written below them. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

# CALENDAR

BLEIN VIE NOA 2021!

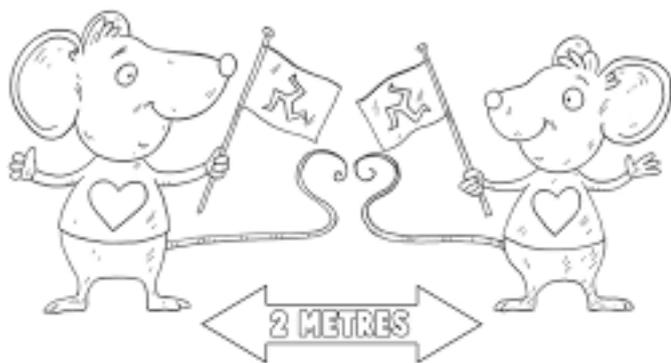
## JANUARY

Unfortunately all face-to-face events are postponed or cancelled this month, including Arraneyn son Mannin & all sessions

## FEBRUARY

6 The Next Big Thing Champions Show, Gaiety Theatre, Douglas, featuring Erin Loach (Manx Gaelic singer), 7.30pm [www.villagaiety.com](http://www.villagaiety.com)

## TANNEE SAUCHEY



For updates & news, follow

[www.facebook.com/groups/manxmusicanddance](http://www.facebook.com/groups/manxmusicanddance) for updates

## Ken Mitchell - Online Music Lessons

Zoom & Skype available

Guitar ( electric & acoutic), Ukulele Banjo, Mandolin etc., Brass ( all)

Music theory, GCSE & A level support

For more details, Contact

Ken 497320 or message:

[www.facebook.com/ken.mitchell.14606](http://www.facebook.com/ken.mitchell.14606)

## GUITAR PIECE OF THE MONTH

THREE LITTLE BOATS: <https://vimeo.com/371252590>

Learn the tune and download the music here, along with lots of other Manx pieces for finger-style guitar:

[www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/manx-guitar-lessons-606045/](http://www.culturevannin.im/watchlisten/videos/manx-guitar-lessons-606045/)

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

[www.manxmusic.com](http://www.manxmusic.com)

~ SESSIONS ~

**TUES** 8pm Singaround at The Manor, Douglas

**WED** 8.30pm Trad Session at the Saddle, Douglas

**THURS** 8pm Singing session at The Mitre, Ramsey

**FRI** 8pm Trad session at The Mitre, Ramsey

**FRI 8pm** Trad session at the Colby Glen

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

First **SUN** of month 12.30pm Trad session in Laxey Sailing Club

Third **SUN** of month 12.30pm Trad session in Ginger Hall, Sulby

~ SESSIONS ~

## culture vannin

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Written and edited by Chloë Woolley for Culture Vannin

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

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