

# ALMOST TIME TO HUNT THE WREN!

WHEN? 26 December WHERE? DOUGLAS, ST JOHNS, RAMSEY & PORT ST MARY

## DOUGLAS:

10.30am from outside the Woodbourne Hotel Fiona McArdle says: "Come and join Bock Yuan Fannee and friends in their tradition of Hunt the Wren in Douglas on 26th December starting promptly at 10.30am outside the Woodbourne Hotel, Alexander Drive. We've gone round the same route for years now so it's easy to follow the music. No need to know the dance in advance -you'll know it by the end at 12pm. It's a good way of keeping warm, working off the Xmas dinner, and raising some cash for Douglas Lifeboat. All welcome, especially musicians."

## ST JOHNS:

10.30am from the Arboretum car park - all welcome!

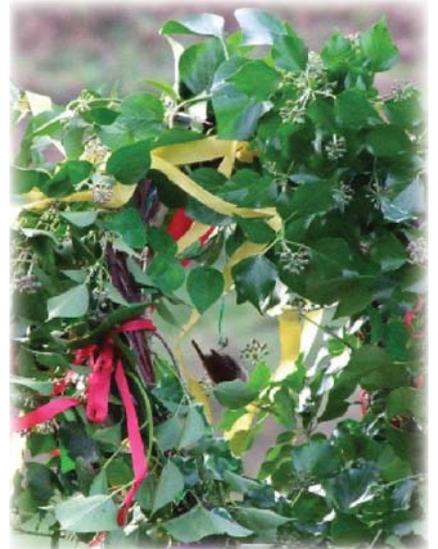
## RAMSEY:

10.30am from St Paul's Hall - all welcome!

## PORT ST MARY:

10am meet at PSM Golf Pavilion for wren pole judging.

10.30am dancers and musicians move around the Port - ending up at the Albert



# HUNT THE WREN

*Celebrating the old Manx tradition  
by singing, playing and dancing around Ramsey!*



**St. Stephen's Day**  
Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> December 2012

*EVERYONE WELCOME*

Meet **10.30am** outside St. Paul's Church  
Refreshments at Quayle's Hall at **11.30am**

Maughold Social Club & Ramsey Heritage Trust



Bill Galbraith came across this version of Hunting The Wren in "Texas Folk Songs" by William A. Owens. <http://untpress.unt.edu/catalog/bookid/146?ID=146> The author classifies it under "Songs And Games For Children", and says that it was the first song he ever knew, learned from his mother as a nursery song and from his brothers as a game.

144 TEXAS FOLK SONGS

The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,  
On St. Stephen's Day he was caught in the furze.  
Up with the kettle, and down with the pan,  
Give us an answer and let us begin.

Any one refusing to give money, for which the boys always ask, was punished by having the wren buried by his door. This would bring bad luck to the inmates of his home. On the night of the same day the boys, using the money collected, would have a jollification, the older ones usually going to town and getting on a spree.

Sung by William A. Owens.

*♩ = 82*

"Let's go hunt - ing," said Rob - sha - Bob; "Let's go hunt - ing," said Ridge to Rodge;  
"Let's go hunting," said Daniel Joe; "Let's go hunting," said Billy Barlow.

"What shall we hunt?" said Rob-sha-Bob; "What shall we hunt?" said Ridge to Rodge;  
"What shall we hunt?" said Daniel Joe; "What shall we hunt?" said Billy Barlow.

"Go hunt a wren," said Rob-sha-Bob; "Go hunt a wren," said Ridge to Rodge;  
"Go hunt a wren," said Daniel Joe; "Go hunt a wren," said Billy Barlow.

"How'll we kill it?" said Rob-sha-Bob; "How'll we kill it?" said Ridge to Rodge;  
"How'll we kill it?" said Daniel Joe; "How'll we kill it?" said Billy Barlow.

"Go borrow a gun," said Rob-sha-Bob; "Go borrow a gun," said Ridge to Rodge;

"Go borrow a gun," said Daniel Joe; "Go borrow a gun," said Billy Barlow.

"How'll we divide it?" said Rob-sha-Bob; "How'll we divide it?" said Ridge to Rodge;  
"How'll we divide it?" said Daniel Joe; "How'll we divide it?" said Billy Barlow.

"I'll take the head," said Rob-sha-Bob; "I'll take the back," said Ridge to Rodge;  
"I'll take the breast," said Daniel Joe; "I'll take the rest," said Billy Barlow.

# Stephen Horne's new score for The Manxman hits the right notes in London

Stephen Horne's newly commissioned score for Hitchcock's last silent film, *The Manxman*, was screened by the British Film Institute in the Empire cinema on Leicester Square in London last month. An almost capacity house greeted the film and score with huge enthusiasm.

The programme notes reveal that, although the score was a new composition, it took reference from Manx music, suggestions having been sent in by Manx Music Specialist for the Manx Heritage Foundation, Dr Chloe Woolley:

Stephen's score for *The Manxman*, while favouring the human drama, is also intended to reflect the folk and religious musical traditions of the Isle of Man...while the score is almost entirely an original composition, it does incorporate a handful of songs that would have been familiar to Manx people at the time Hall Caine's novel was written. These include the haunting 'Ellan Vannin', long associated with the Manx diaspora, which is used to accompany Pete's departure from and return to the island. (BFI programme notes)

The score was performed by five musicians:

Stephen Horne (piano/accordion/flute), Jennifer Bennett (fiddle/viola), Joby Burgess (percussion), Janey Miller (oboe/oboe d'Amore), Ruth Wall (lever harp/wire harp).

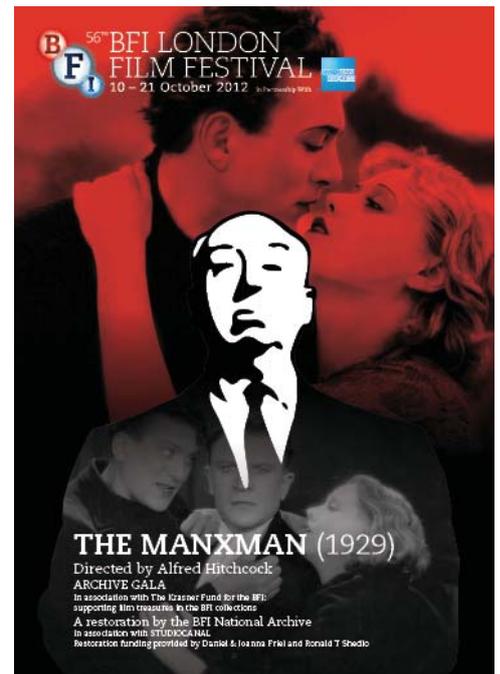
Here are two reviews:

<http://silentlondon.co.uk/2012/10/20/the-manxman-london-film-festival-review/>

[http://ithankyouarthur.blogspot.co.uk/2012\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html](http://ithankyouarthur.blogspot.co.uk/2012_10_01_archive.html)

[www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk)

[www.stephenhorne.co.uk](http://www.stephenhorne.co.uk)



## CLUB KIAULL VIDEO NOW ONLINE

The MHF Music Development Team made a video with Club Kiaull from QEII High School - check it out online where you can see the fabulous work done by Paul Rogers from the Unnid Gaelgagh, the Manx Language Unit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djp4dK2Uc3U>

## Songs about the Nunnery Footpath abound!

check them out on the **Manx Research blog**:

<http://manxresearch.wordpress.com/2012/11/14/the-nunnery-footpath-between-douglas-and-old-kirk-braddan/>

Congratulations to Dr John Bethell who was honoured with The Friends Provident International Award for Volunteer of the Year in the IOM Newspapers Awards for Excellence 2012. John has committed long years to the arts in the Isle of Man and in particular in conjunction with the Erin Arts Centre, its community work, international festivals and competitions.

[www2.iomtoday.co.uk/AFE/AFE\\_2010/index.html](http://www2.iomtoday.co.uk/AFE/AFE_2010/index.html)

KMJ readers might like to know that talented Irish flute player and singer **Nuala Kennedy** will be over for the Mananan Festival on **20 June 2013** at the Erin Arts Centre...more information nearer the time.



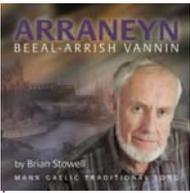
# perfect gifts to pop in the post!

What's light, bright and easily wrapped? Yes, you guessed it, those wonderful Manx music CDs and books. There's more than ever on offer and they are an easy way to send a very special gift to loved ones around the world. Where to find them? Pop into the Island's bookshops or Manx Museum and other giftshops or find most of them online via [www.manxmusic.com](http://www.manxmusic.com)

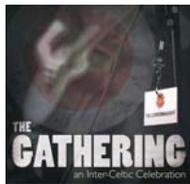
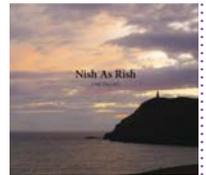


Barrule's self-titled debut CD was the talk of the town in 2012 - sample the delights of top class fiddle, accordion, bouzouki and voice - buy it online here [www.barruletrio.com/shop/](http://www.barruletrio.com/shop/)

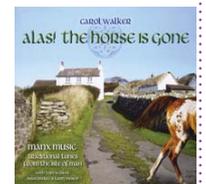
Also newly released is *The Isle & The Sea* - a new music and art project from Scaanjoon's Nigel Brown. The CD is instrumental, atmospheric and ambient and there's a limited edition art print with the first 100 copies. At the moment you can buy it in Studio 42 in PSM (with the art prints), Shakti Man in Ramsey or Peter Norris Music in Douglas.



Brian Stowell's CD *Arraneyn* is a reissue of the 1973 recording, it is the perfect introduction to Manx songs. Nish as Rish won the prestigious folk group trophy at the Lorient festival this summer. Their debut recording introduces you to their quirky and sleek arrangements, new compositions and explorations of traditional material.



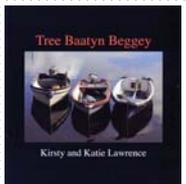
Yn Chruinnaght's *The Gathering* CD is an inter-Celtic celebration. With tracks from Mabon, Rachel Hair, Trio Froger and a whole host of others, it's the perfect gift. Available online here: [www.ynchruinnaght.com/cd/](http://www.ynchruinnaght.com/cd/)  
Carol Walker's *Alas the Horse is Gone* is gorgeous - mountain dulcimer, fiddle. Download or buy the CD here: [www.cdbaby.com/cd/carolwalker](http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/carolwalker)



These two CDs from Skeal and Staa mix tracks from vocal and instrumental traditions in gorgeous arrangements:

Staa: *She Lhong Honnick Mee* (2009)

Skeal: *Slipway* (2009) Like this? Try Skeal's debut CD *Long Story* (2005)



Need a good fix of traditional tunes, played with energy and elegance? Then try out CDs by King Chiallee and Kirsty & Katie Lawrence:

Kirsty & Katie Lawrence: *Tree Baatyn Beggey* (2006)

King Chiallee: *Nish* (2006)...also *Reel:Ode* (2003)



If you want a mix of fiddle, harp and guitar or fiddles, accordion and bodhran, then these two recordings will be right up your street:

Osborne, Guard & Lumb: *Kiaull Manninagh* (2008)

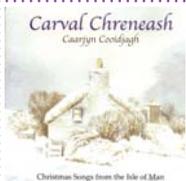
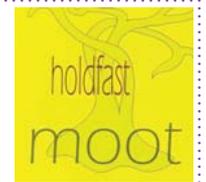
Phynnodderee: *Y Reesht* (2003) or *There's no F in Phynnodderee* (1999)



Fancy something that bit different? From the upbeat protest songs (think green, think human rights) to the electronic dub-tinged soundscapes of Moot, Manx music is never dull...

The Mollag Band: *Into the Tide* (1997)

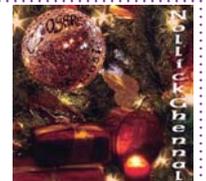
Moot: *Holdfast* (2006)



Manx Gaelic choirs Caarjyn Coidjagh have two CDs specially put together for Christmas, as well as other releases:

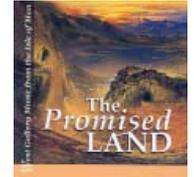
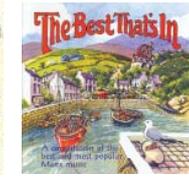
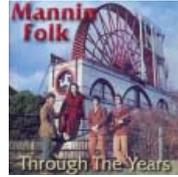
Caarjyn Coidjagh: *Carval Chreneash* (2004) also try *Skellyn* (2008)

Cliogaree Twoaie: *Nollick Ghennal* (2006) or *Drogh Vraane* (2005)

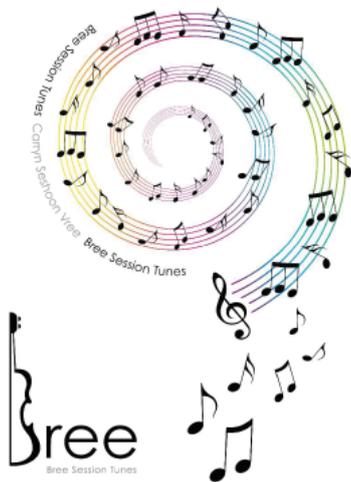


Mactullagh Vannin's *Twisted Roots* is one of the catchiest introductions to Manx instrumental music - their music has been used for jingles on Manx Radio for years now. The Mannin Folk's retrospective *Through The Years* brings together all the favourites - 'Laxey Wheel' and 'Foxdale Miner' to name but a few.

Songs from the *Manx National Song Book* feature on *Come Back to Mona*, and West Gallery church music is the focus of *The Promised Land*. For a mixture of all styles and genres, pick up *The Best That's In!*



## LIOARYN - BOOKS

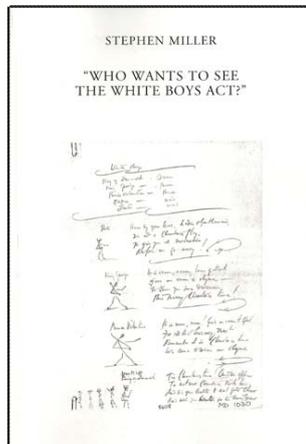
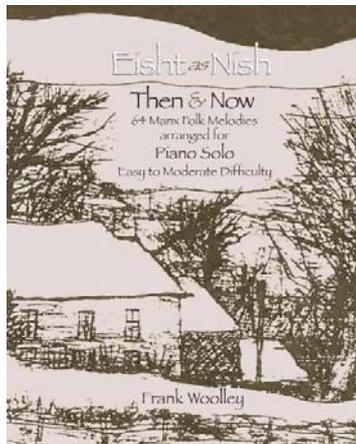
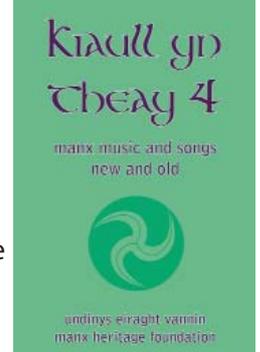


2012 saw the arrival of an exciting new tune book with flippable sections - yes, you, too, can build your own fabulous Manx music sets with the aid of *Bree Session Tunes*. Priced only £10 (plus p&p) it's available here: [www.manxmusic.com/publication\\_216692.html](http://www.manxmusic.com/publication_216692.html)

The new edition of Fenella Bazin's *Ree ny Marrey* features over 60 songs arranged for piano and voice in Manx and English and illustrated by Juan Moore - only £12 in local bookshops and online here: [www.manxheritage.org/cms/publication\\_1695.html](http://www.manxheritage.org/cms/publication_1695.html)

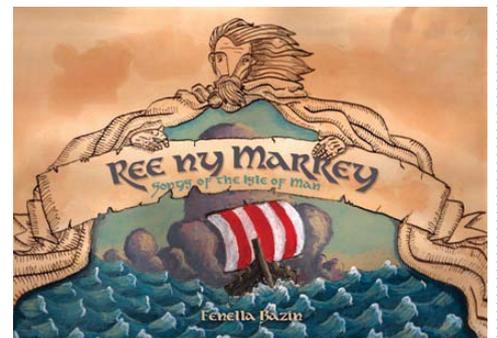
If you're interested in a gift for budding pianists, then you should check out the lovely arrangements by Frank Woolley in *Eisht as Nish*, great value at only £7.50.

For all those traditional musicians in your life, *Kiaull yn Theay 3* and *Kiaull yn Theay 4* are collections of tunes and songs, mixing those from older manuscripts with newly-composed pieces by some of the best musicians on the Island. The tunes are suitable for a wide range of instruments and singers. Books 1 and 2 have recently been reissued with spiral binding for ease of use. At only £6 each, the books are a great gift for anyone interested in the developing Manx traditional music scene.



For those of you interested in traditions, Stephen Miller's book on the White Boys is an excellent place to start - pick it up at the Manx Museum Shop for around £20.

Available in good bookshops, MNH shops and online



Whilst searching for the new Laxey Wheel song (see p.10 of KMJ) online, Chloe came across this! Michael Spriggs' guitar album *Without Words* features tracks inspired by the Manx landscape:

[www.allmusic.com/album/without-words-mw0000697714](http://www.allmusic.com/album/without-words-mw0000697714)

It turns out that the Nashville session musician who was born in Sussex was formally educated in England, the Isle of Man and Canada - hence the connection with the Manx landscape. He attended Niagara University, majoring in Composition and Music Theory. As a session musician, he has played on over 5000 live, radio, and televised shows and works with hundreds of engineers, writers, session players and artists annually. He has been featured in *Guitar Player Magazine*, *Taylor Wood*. *Steel and the Peavey Monitor*.

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



Thanks to Cathy Clucas who spotted this little red bird on YouTube - a really nice animation to go along with Ushag Veg Ruy: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0pnuno8Aew](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0pnuno8Aew)

LULLABIES OF THE WORLD  
director. script. art LISA SKVORTSOVA  
project. idea and producer ARSEN  
GOTTLIEB  
animator ANNA SOLOVYOVA  
METRONOME FILMS 2007

## Barrule impress fiddle great Liz Carroll at Scots Fiddle Festival in Edinburgh

*Adam Rhodes writes:*

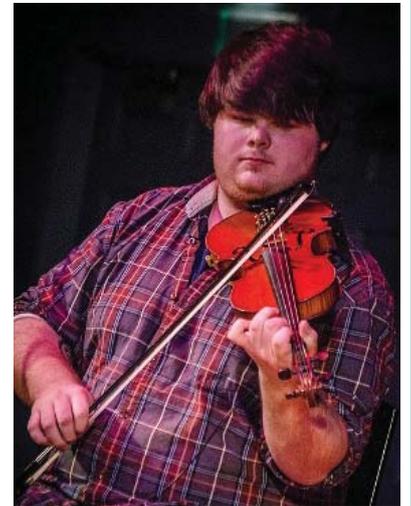
After a cracking weekend at the Scots Fiddle Festival in Edinburgh, it was nice to see so much interest in Manx music. If any budding fiddle players are about here next year, I recommend it! Tons of workshops, concerts, ceilidhs etc.

Tom Callister gave a workshop to a great bunch of fiddlers, teaching them some popular Manx tunes, which went down a storm. Barrule even managed to pass on their magic code word (and a CD of course) to none other than **Liz Carroll**! Check out the video at 4m 50s:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NReNvV5P0FA>

There are also some fine photos of the lads on The Queen's Hall Flickr stream: [www.flickr.com/photos/thequeenshall/page3/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/thequeenshall/page3/)

*Photos reproduced here by permission Eilidh Steel - Artistic Director & Outreach Co-ordinator for the Scots Fiddle Festival.*



# New book on Iliam Dhone launched to the sound of the ballad Baase Iliam Dhone

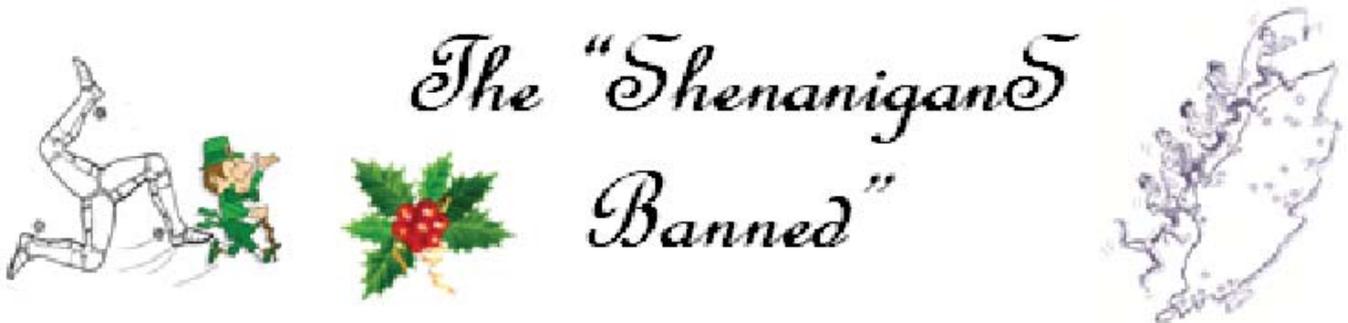
Milntown House, the ancestral home of the Christian family, was the location for the launch of the new and definitive biography of William Christian, otherwise known as Iliam Dhone, one of the most controversial figures in Manx history. The launch was in the presence of the Hon. Clare Christian, MLC, President of Tynwald. MHF Chairman, Hon. Phil Gawne MHK, led the singing of the ballad recounting the execution of Iliam Dhone with assembled guests taking up the ostinato 'A-treih' (alas) sung as an accompaniment alternating tonic and fourth as noted by Mona Douglas.

2013 is the 350th anniversary of the execution of Iliam Dhone by firing squad at Hango Hill outside Castletown, and this biography by Jennifer Kewley Draskau has been commissioned by the Manx Heritage Foundation to mark this occasion.

The book retails for £20 and is available throughout the Island or can be ordered online by following this link:

[www.manxheritage.org/cms/publication\\_243566.html](http://www.manxheritage.org/cms/publication_243566.html)

Full news story online here: [www.manxheritage.org/cms/news\\_story\\_243573.html](http://www.manxheritage.org/cms/news_story_243573.html)



## The "Shenanigans Banned"

**"A rip roaring evening of festive fun and frivolity"**

Manx songs, Irish songs, rollicking ribald ballads.

Bring your own picnic and booze

Tickets from :- Laxey Chemist £6.00p

**Laxey Working Men's Institute  
Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December starts 8.00pm**



**Dedicated  
founder member  
of MFDS  
passes away**

*Joan Cowell writes:*

The Manx Folk Dance Society regrets the loss of one of its Founder Members on 13th November 2012 with the death of Miss Mildred Holgate, aged 94. She had been part of the dance display team for many years as well as serving as their Honorary Secretary from 1974 to 1992. The Society mourns the passing of this dedicated and faithful member.



*Mildred is pictured in the centre of the front row*

THE RAMSEY CHORAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT,  
"REJOICE AND BE MERRY"

WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY 8TH DECEMBER 2012  
AT ST PAULS CHURCH RAMSEY STARTING AT 7.30 P.M.

WE WILL BE CELEBRATING CHRISTMASTIDE WITH MUSIC AND RECITATIONS,  
INCLUDING THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF A MANX CHRISTMAS FANTASIA,  
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF NICK ROBERTS.

THE CHOIR WILL BE SINGING A DIVERSE RANGE OF CHORALS FROM  
TRADITIONAL TO LESSER WELL KNOWN PIECES.

ALL ARE WELCOME AND RERESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED  
IN THE CHURCH HALL AFTER THE CONCERT.

**Share na Veg** played at a coffee morning at Ramsey Town Hall in November in aid of the League of Friends of Ramsey Cottage Hospital. Daniella Stoutt danced Dooraght accompanied by Olivia Colgan on the harp. Emmie Cain played a couple of tunes on the Northumbrian smallpipes and the whole group played Car Juan Nan and Car ny Ferrishyn. We also won a raffle prize! Wendy Hurst notes that it was the first public performance for Mariella, one of Sean Craig's grandchildren, to whom Wendy has been teaching Manx tunes on button box for a few weeks. Jeant dy mie da Share na Veg!



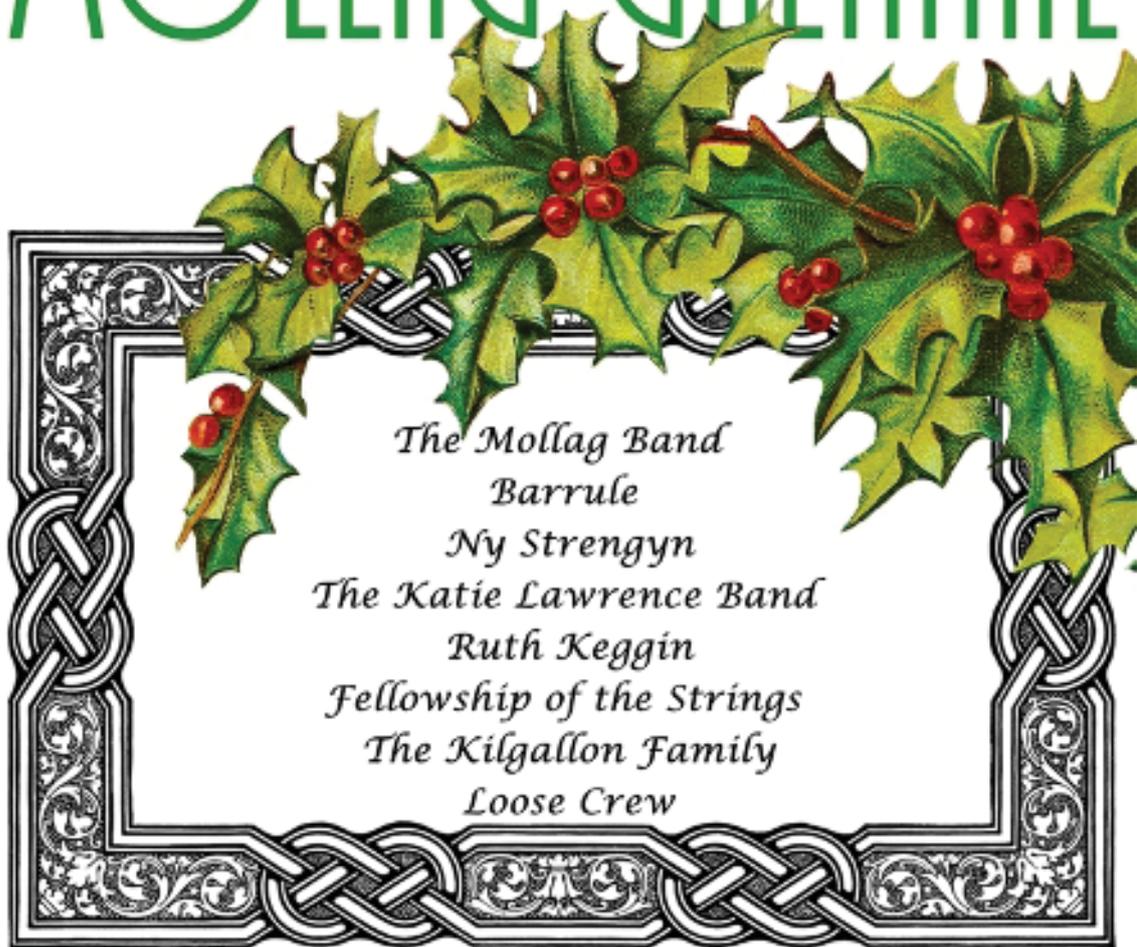
# MOLLAG GHENNAL

27 DECEMBER, DOUGLAS MASONIC, 8PM  
TICKETS IN ADVANCE £12 FROM USUAL OUTLETS

The mighty feast of entertainment that is the Mollag Ghennal - think THE ultimate Manx cultural variety show - will be on Tuesday 27 December at the Douglas Masonic Hall, 8pm. Acts will include Barrule, Ruth Keggin, Kilgallon Family, Strengyn, Fellowship of the String, Loose Crew and, of course, the hosts, The Mollag Band. There will be the usual fine fare of sandwiches and cake! Organiser, Greg Joughin, says "We're looking for set designers and makers for the 27th...any volunteers out there?" If so, please contact Greg on [gregjoughin\(AT\)manx.net](mailto:gregjoughin(AT)manx.net)

AN EVENING OF MANX MUSIC

# MOLLAG GHENNAL



**FREEMASONS HALL, DOUGLAS**  
**THURSDAY 27TH DECEMBER, 8PM**

TICKETS £12

- INCLUDES HOMEMADE SANDWICHES AND CAKE

from Celtic Gold - Peel, Shakti Man - Ramsey, Thompson Travel - Port Erin,  
Peter Norris Music - Douglas. Enquiries - Greg Joughin 843318

# RUSHEN BAND CONTEST SUCCESS



Rushen Silver Band travelled to Selkirk in the Scottish Borders on Saturday 3rd November to take part in the Borders Entertainment Contest. This was the first time that the Band had taken part in a contest in the UK.

In their programme the Band played an arrangement by Band MD John Kinley of local folk song Hunt The Wren, Euphonium Solo Varied Mood, Eventide (again arranged by John Kinley), and finished with a piece entitled I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free. The Band represented themselves and the Isle Of Man overall in a very positive manner, and were placed 2nd of the Fourth Section bands, and 15th overall across the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sections.

The Band would like to thank the Isle Of Man Arts Council for their support with the trip, together with all the members of the community in the south of the island who contributed towards the trip at one of the fundraising events that took place earlier in the year. Everyone in the Band would also like to thank their Musical Director John Kinley for his efforts; and to band members Martin Norbury and Chris Weldon for their work in organising the trip and registering the band respectively.

Rushen Silver Band now look forward to another busy December engagements schedule, starting with their own Christmas Concert (featuring the Meadowside Choral Society) on Saturday 1st December.

THE CELTIC CONGRESS IS LOOKING FOR A YOUNG SPEAKER TO REPRESENT THE MANNIN BRANCH AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN BODMIN, CORNWALL, 1ST - 6TH APRIL 2013 - IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH KMJ AND WE'LL PASS YOUR DETAILS ON TO THE ORGANISERS.

Ruth Keggins and Natalie Nic Shim represented Yn Chruinnaght Inter-Celtic Festival at the Oireachtas in Letterkenny, Ireland last month. The Irish language gathering has a fabulous presence on Facebook - check it out here:  
<https://www.facebook.com/oireachtas.nagaeilge>

## ~ SESSIONS ~

THURS 8pm Singing session at The Royal, Ramsey  
FRI 8.30pm Tynwald Inn, St. Johns      FRI 9pm Irish at The Mitre, Ramsey  
Folk at the Club (1st or 2nd Fri of month), 8pm, Peel Golf Club  
Last FRI of month 9pm, Kiaull as Gaelg, Albert, Port St Mary  
SAT 10pm Manx at The White House, Peel

## Oikan ayns Cleveland!

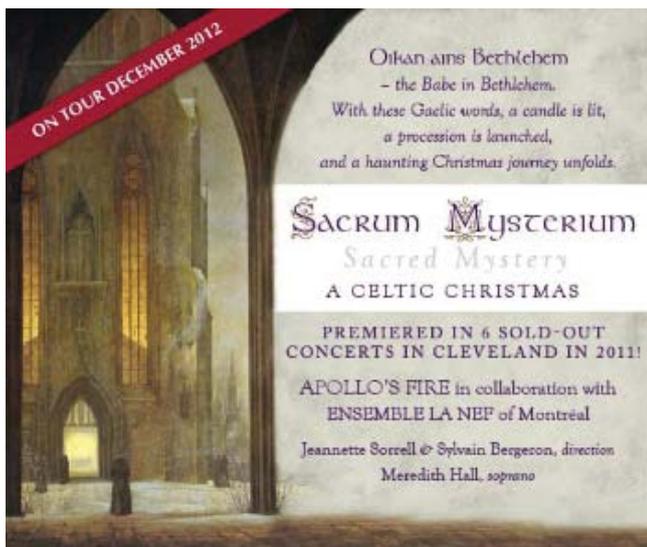
With clear influence from Emma Christian's recording on *Beneath the Twilight*, here's 'Oikan ayns Bethlehem' as performed in Cleveland, Ohio - sourced by Ruth Keggin on YouTube at the same time as the poster (below) was emailed by Fenella Bazin!

### DETAILS:

Highlights from the new CD/DVD by Apollo's Fire, released on Avie Records in Sept. 2012. Filmed at Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, OH - December 2011. Apollo's Fire Baroque Orchestra Jeannette Sorrell, conductor with Ensemble La Nef of Montréal - Sylvain Bergeron, archlute/director Meredith Hall, soprano Jesse Blumberg & John Buffett, baritones Steve Player, dancer/guitar

Have a look and a listen online here:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lr0gJd7szg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lr0gJd7szg)



*This song was sent in by Marion Whistle of London - she knows the song (and the tune) but has no clue where it's from - neither do we! Any ideas?*

## The Laxey Wheel

As I went out one summer's day  
I met a maiden, fair as May;  
I told her whither I was bound:  
To where the Laxey Wheel goes round.

### Refrain:

The Laxey Wheel, the Laxey Wheel,  
Where my true love my heart did steal;  
Lost all my money on a no-tail cat,  
And now my only chattel is my three-peaked hat!

I asked her what was her intent,  
And then her fairing neat, she rent'  
She started so to sigh and mourn,  
She rued the day that she was born.

I kissed her gently on her cheek,  
And tender words to her did speak;  
And then we danced a merry reel  
To the turning of the Laxey Wheel.

So all you maidens, young and old,  
Bestow your love, lest it grow cold;  
The seasons flee, with no repeal -  
They roll round like the Laxey Wheel!

### Final Refrain:

The Laxey Wheel, the Laxey Wheel,  
Where my true love my heart did steal;  
Lost all my money on a no-tail cat,  
---- and that's that!!

## JOIN THE IOM WIND ORCHESTRA FOR SOME BUSKING

The Douglas Development Partnership have agreed to the following busking dates for the Isle of Man Wind Orchestra (@IOMWO) for December 2012:

Saturday 1st December 2012 - 12noon to 2pm Granville Street, Douglas

Sunday 9th December 2012 - 2pm to 4pm, Regent Street, Douglas

Sunday 16th December 2012 - 1pm to 4pm, Regent Street, Douglas

Sunday 23rd December 2012 - 2pm to 4pm, Regent Street, Douglas

As many members as possible will be performing traditional Christmas Carols and festive tunes to raise money for the Isle of Man Wind Orchestra (IOM charity no.1072) which will support the aims of the Orchestra on the Isle of Man. If you play a wind or brass instrument come along and join the members of the Orchestra in the performance. Warm clothing is essential!

Further information from [www.iomwo.com](http://www.iomwo.com), [winds@wm.im](mailto:winds@wm.im) or on 07624 437751

Michael Morrison, Chairman, Isle of Man Wind Orchestra

e-mail [winds@wm.im](mailto:winds@wm.im) or find the IOMWO on Facebook or Twitter @IOMWO

# ARRANE SON MANNIN



## COMPETITION FOR A NEW SONG IN MANX WILL BE HELD ON 11 JANUARY AT PEEL MASONIC HALL

A £300 prize, sponsored by the Manx Heritage Foundation, will be awarded to the best new song in Manx Gaelic. The prizewinning group will go to the Pan-Celtic Festival in Carlow 2-6 April, Ireland, to perform the song in the International Song Competition.

**What to do?** Your song must be in Manx Gaelic with instrumental accompaniment. It can be rock, pop, folk, traditional - any type, as long as it's in Manx. Both lyrics and tune must be new composition in 2012 and not performed previously in public competition in IOM. Live group performance of two to six persons with no previously recorded music or effects. Performance does not need the composer to play.

The song will be judged as follows:

**Lyrics: 30 points**

**Music: 30 points**

**Presentation: 40 points**

The winning group undertake to perform at the Pan-Celtic Festival in Carlow, April 2012. A proportion of travelling and accommodation expenses will be paid up to a set maximum.

Good song, no Manx? Email for help to find a translator.

Entry forms from:

Fiona McArdle Tel: **471543**

Email: **fmcardle@manx.net**

Return entry form by **14 December 2012**

Music and lyrics to be sent in by **31 December 2012**



# “WE ARE THE MOLLAG BAND”

## by Stephen Miller

Christmas-tide saw many itinerant groups out and about in the Isle of Man celebrating the holiday season: familiar are the White Boys and those on Hunt the Wren. Less familiar is the Mollag Band, though they are the one group well described by twentieth century collectors of folklore, notably Mona Douglas, Leighton Stowell, and W.W. Gill but not as such from earlier ones. It is just Dr John Clague who mentions them in the passage here published in 1911 but dating likely from the 1890s:

At Christmas time the Manx boys used to go about making a rough music with tin whistles, Jew’s-harps, tin-cans, and papered combs, and flourishing and thumping mollags—the sheepskin bladders which buoy the nets. This procession was called “the Mollag-band.” Faces were blacked or raddled, dress was eccentric, and coppers were not refused, but these street minstrels were quite distinct from the Wren-boys.

There is a lengthier and later description from W.W. Gill worth quoting in full:

The Christmastide “Mollag Bands,” like the Wren Boys and other ceremonial processions, descended in the course of time from men to boys before dying out altogether. My only recollection of the Mollag Band is that of an itinerant party of boys with blackened and raddled faces and eccentric attire, one or more waving and thumping with a mollag and all bellowing some popular song of the period. But I have been told by old residents that the Ramsey Mollag Band formerly consisted of fishermen, headed for a period by a big Irishman who swung his mollag at the end of a pole and swatted all who ventured too near. Some members of the old processions were dressed as women. The party used to go into shops and demand money, in addition to collecting coppers en route. They had a marching-song with English words.

This dates from 1933, and there are a number of points to be unpicked here. In order of Gill’s own comments, the Mollag Band was now one composed of adolescents having formerly been an adult phenomenon. They went about in disguise, a point made as seen by Clague. As they made their rounds, they made what was termed “rough music,” in other words, “disorganised music,” entering into another liminal zone (disguise the other). Their song repertoire was a current one showing the interaction of metropolitan culture with that of the Island. Then we have the observation that the Mollag Band formerly consisted of adult males, notably fisherman, a point picked up by other folklorists. Again, disguise, though on this occasion by reverse dressing. They collected money, or rather, demanded it. Finally, there was a specific song associated with them.

Turning to the adult phenomenon of the Mollag Band, they were as seen above all fisherman, and they have been sighted all over the Island: Castletown, Dalby, Douglas, Lezayre [sic], Maughold, Peel, and Ramsey (it is, however, with Castletown that the descriptive material is particularly rich). They went about as a party, in disguise as already mentioned, and with one of their members known as “The Fool” and variously named: “Bimbo” (Castletown); “Incabon” (Castletown); “Sambo” (Douglas & Ramsey); “Sonnys” (Dalby). This character in places was disguised apart from the rest of the band. In Castletown it was as a bear, in Dalby a pig (sonnys is Manx Gaelic for pig), in Maughold the Fool wore a whole sheepskin (complete with the horns), while in Douglas and Ramsey it was just a blackened face.

But not all Mollag Bands were in disguise according to descriptions provided by Mona Douglas. From an informant in Castletown, who also said that the band appeared after “Hunt the Wren” was finished, they were “dressed in tall hats and old tail coats and white trousers, generally a bit ragged and all decorated with holly and ivy and coloured ribbon or paper streamers.” Another mention by Douglas has them “dressed in white suits with long sleeveless coats and tall felt hats of blue, decorated with evergreens and paper streamers.”

All descriptions agree that they carried with them *mollags* (floats for fishing nets made from dog-skin) on the ends of poles—hence the name, of course, of the group—and as Douglas reports “with which they made passes at any person they met [...]” Associated with the Mollag Band was both a song and a dance: “they performed a kind of marching dance with high leaps at intervals, to their own singing of a wild dance-tune.” She provides further information on this point:

The man who told me all this could not remember either the words of their song—they were Manx words though, he said—or the steps of the dance; but he hummed over the air for me, a variant of an old tune to Hunt the Wren, and said that they danced round in a circle in a peculiar spiral motion of the body, but separately not joining hands, and sometimes they leapt up all together and shouted.

As regards this dance:

I am inclined to think the dance ["The Salmon Leap"] virtually the same as [...] The Mollag Dance, which belongs to Castletown, and was also formerly danced by fishermen, though later by men of the town. Here mollags slung on ropes were used to chase one dancer and imprison him, and although I have not got nearly such a complete description, certain features of the dance suggest the above. Both dances seem to have inspired great terror in all except those actually taking part in them.

This is one feature of the Mollag Band that must be noticed: whilst the White Boys and Hunt the Wren were welcomed customs, the Mollag Band was of a different nature: everything about them was liminal—disguised with blackened faces they dressed variously as women, animals, or reversed their clothing. Their music was rough in all senses of the word. They were aggressive and attacked bystanders with their mollags and they demanded money. Above all, they were fishermen on dry land and not at sea. Folk customs at times take one into a world turned upside down. Dark, anarchic of the established order, and above all, though just for a while on a sanctioned day, dangerous to the social order and above all the forces of authority.

This theme takes us to the only nineteenth century reporting of the Mollag Band we have to date and taken from the *Manx Sun* for 1892:

A Correspondent asks what has become of the "Mollag Band" this Christmas. They have certainly not been going about making the night hideous with song and revelry. I don't know whether they have gone up aloft or migrated into some other sphere. My correspondent had better ask a policeman. He will be more likely to know.

Evidently, this is a report of what might be called the "junior" Mollag Band, the adolescents as mentioned by Clague rather than the adults of the other Mollag Band as described by later folklorists. Interesting is the mention of "better ask a policeman" as to where the Mollag Band were nowadays. In other words, they are under active suppression by the authorities as they seek to contain folk customs and make them passive and decorative rather than them being active and usurping of public space. This is taken up in a piece from 1914, in the *Peel City Guardian*:

Writing of Christmas reminds me of changes which have taken place in some respects in the manner of its observance. The "White Boys" and "The Mollag Band" have disappeared, and I think to a great extent the police are responsible for this."

I have not heard any regrets expressed in consequence. Both institutions were an almost unmitigated nuisance, especially the "band." Both parties used to walk into shops and take possession of them for a time, even on Christmas Eve, and render business impossible. And when they got into houses they often scared the younger children almost into fits.

They are gone, together with a lot of other outrages which used to be inflicted on the community—"jus' for fun" in many cases, but in that of the "White Boys" and "The Mollag Band" for profit combined with fun. Peace to their ashes.

This does read as rather confused as regards the activities of the White Boys; all other accounts have them simply performing the Mummers Play in public houses and private households and not involving themselves as reported here in blockading access to shops for ransom. Nevertheless, it is an eyewitness account and must be taken into account. But returning to the Mollag Band, and here the "junior band," we see again the mention of the police force as being a factor in the suppression of this calendar custom. The so-called rougher element associated with Hop-tu-Naa was similarly repressed in this period. The White Boys in Ramsey who sought to reform themselves after the end of the 1914–18 war were told they needed a Street Performers License in order to carry out their performances; the cost alone wiped out the money they were likely to earn. The Mollag Band is now gone from the streets of the Island and not one feels by their own choice. Vernacular culture is one always under threat of control if not downright suppression by the authorities, to be permitted only when it appears "folkloric," in other words passive and decorative. The Mollag Band were unlikely ever to have become folkloric and that of course led to their ending.

THE MICHAEL PLAYERS ARE DOING A DIALECT PLAY  
AT THEIR OIE'LL VERREE ON 5TH JAN 2013 HELD IN  
THE EBENEZER HALL, KIRK MICHAEL AT 7.30 PM

# Come and celebrate Shenn Laa Nollick!

*Peter Cubberley of Ny Fennee writes:*

To those uninitiated to older customs of the Isle of Mann, it may seem like a bit late to celebrate Christmas in January and you'd think Christmas would be over. However in the old style calendar Christmas fell on January 6th. Don't put your baubles back in the attic until after the 6th, as the old Manx Christmas Day (Shenn Laa Nollick) is January 6th, and it is being celebrated on the Friday nearest with a festive ceili in Ramsey on the 4th.

In the Mann of yesteryear the 12 days of Christmas were known as Y Kegeesh Ommidjagh (The Foolish Fortnight), a period of communal music and dancing that culminated on the 6th.

In 2013 that party will remain alive, as Manx traditional music and dance group Ny Fennee will stage their inaugural Giense Shenn Laa Nollick – Old Christmas Day Ceili. The doors of the Masonic hall in Lezayre Road will swing open at 7.30pm and the Celtic music and footwork will flow until 10:30pm.

Ny Fennee musician Peddyr Cubberley is the man behind the event, which is open to all ages. He said: "Christmas time is usually a quiet time for ceilis as a rule and we decided last year that it'd be a great opportunity to celebrate old Christmas Day and bring the community together for a good night of music, dance and fun and we're doing the same again this year thus keeping our traditional customs alive!"

People new to Manx dancing are as welcome as the old hands, as 'callers' will be on hand to talk the crowd through the steps, while musical interludes from members of band Mactullagh Vannin, Ny Fennee and hopefully guest musicians will provide breaks for the dancers and variety in general. There is an admission of £4 for adults and £2 for under 16s which will help towards Ny Fennee's funding. "We have about 40 kids involved in Ny Fennee and they all need costumes, and every penny helps toward trips away to festival to showcase Manx traditional and contemporary dance in traditional style," explained Peddyr.

Ny Fennee leader Juan Garrett says people was looking forward to the event, as it's a last chance for many to come together before the end of the Christmas break, especially for our students studying away at university. He said: "A few members go out to Hunt the Wren on St Stephen's Day, but we don't usually do anything as a whole group over Christmas. In the past we've been part of the Oie'll Verrey (old Manx Christmas Eve) service in Kirk Michael, but we want a social event to get the whole group together."

As a Christmas event, will any aspect of the evening be festively themed? "It will just be a normal ceili, though I suppose it's Christmassy in the sense that in the old days the barns would all be full of music throughout Kegeesh Ommidjagh / Foolish Fortnight," said Juan. "And it's a chance for people to get together for a party on the date of old Manx Christmas."

As for the ceili, Peddyr concluded: "It will be good for burning off those Christmas calories. People just need to bring themselves, a few quid, and plenty of energy and craic and a good way to celebrate the end of our 30 years and the beginning of the next 30 years to come!"

*Northern-based Ny Fennee, which means 'The Heroes/Champions' in Manx, has been active since 1982, and as well as busy summer schedules and representing the Island at festivals home and abroad, they are the group behind the Shennaghys Jiu (Tradition Today) Celtic youth festival around Easter time.*



Ny Fennee Presents



## Giense Shenn Laa Nollick *Old Christmas Day Ceili*

**Masonic Hall, Ramsey**  
**Friday, January 4th 2013**  
**7:30 – 10:30pm**



**Tickets - £4/£2**



**Beejee Ayn! / All Welcome!**

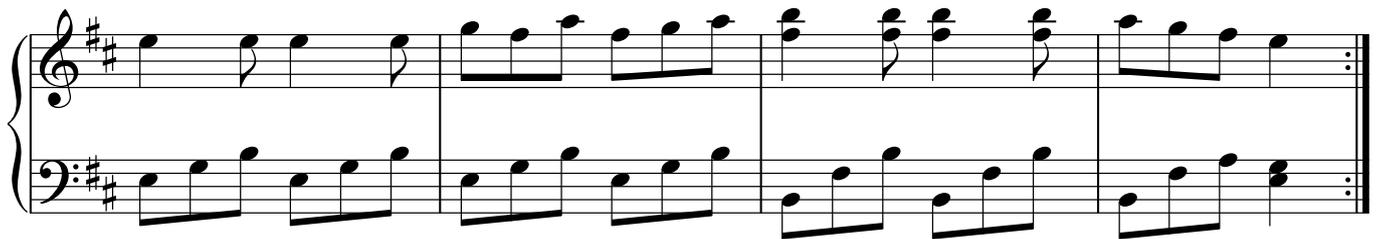
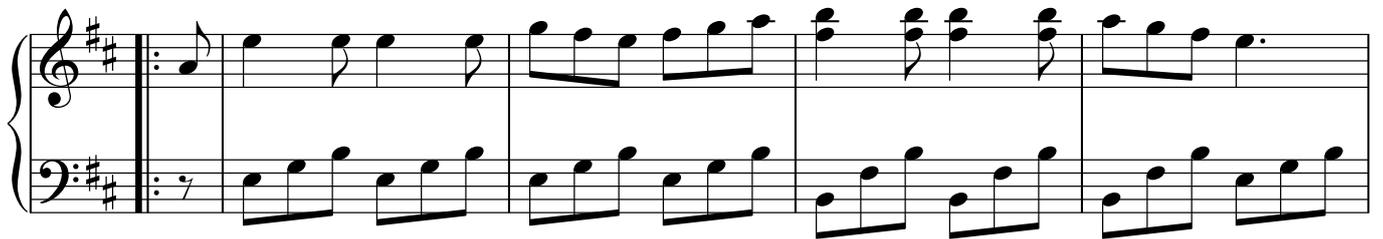
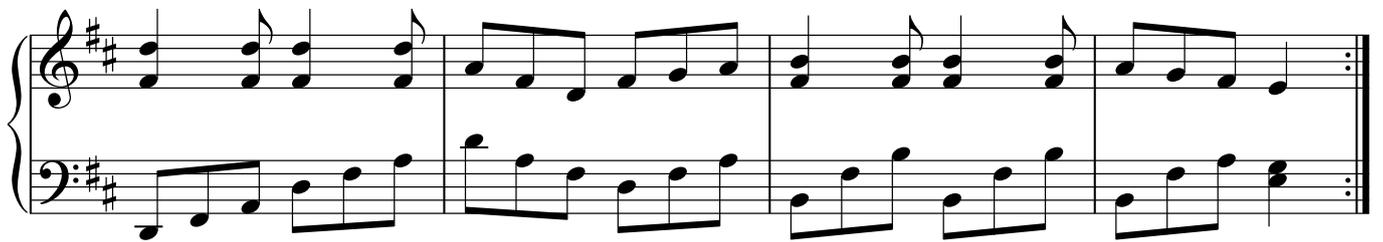
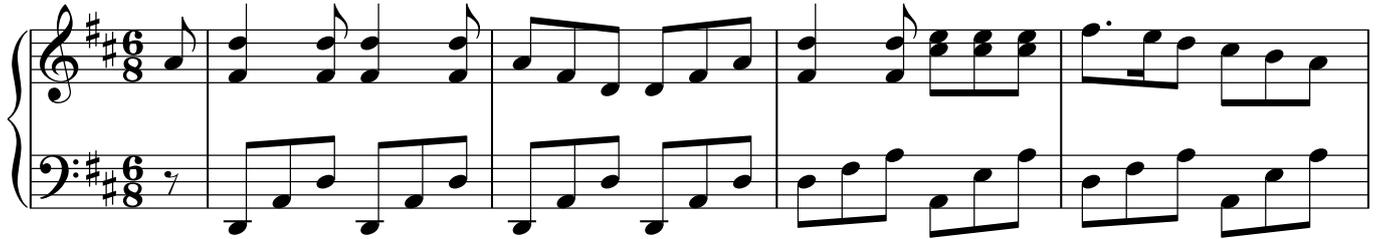


# TRANSCRIPTION OF THE MONTH

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

Transcribed from *The Mona Melodies* 1820  
MNHL J48/2x 2593/4

## Hunt the Wren



*This version of Hunt the Wren comes from Mona Melodies and was transcribed by Cinzia Yates when she was working for the Manx Heritage Foundation - it's interesting to compare versions.*

*Have a listen to the midi file attached to the newsletter if you get chance!*

*Don't forget, if you'd like to have a piece of music featured here, just let us know.*

**Manx Folk Dance Society**

**Winter Term**

**Beginners Classes**

**Onchan Methodist Church Hall  
Main Road Onchan**

**Tuesdays\* from 7.00 to 8.00pm  
commencing 15th January 2013**

**• Everyone welcome •**

*\* Not 2nd Tuesdays in the month*

Lessons £20 for the term

More info. [www.manxfolkdance.org.uk](http://www.manxfolkdance.org.uk)

Contact: Tel. 624858 or [mfds@manx.net](mailto:mfds@manx.net)

MUSICIAN and journalist John Gregory now teaches guitar full time.

The former editor of the Manx Independent's What What Where supplement and current Manx Tails columnist teaches both acoustic and electric guitar in rock, pop, folk and blues styles.

As well as giving individual lessons he holds group tuition in Douglas and Ramsey every fortnight.

John is known in the Island's music scene as Blue John as he plays guitar in the blues duo Blue John and Papa Cass. For further information ring John on 204320 or email him at [Bluejohnmedia@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Bluejohnmedia@hotmail.co.uk)

## Guitar lessons by John Gregory



*An ideal Christmas present!*

Do you or does someone you know want to learn the acoustic or electric guitar but are not sure how to get started?

Well known tutor, musician and music writer John Gregory provides fun, friendly lessons in rock, pop, blues and folk styles across the Isle of Man.

Here's what one of John's students has to say: *"Having spent many years failing to learn the guitar I have now finally found success. And the reason for this sudden change in fortune lies squarely with John! His unbridled enthusiasm for the guitar and for all types of music is quite simply infectious. Constantly supportive, inventive and knowledgeable it is always a pleasure to spend time with John. Highly, and I mean HIGHLY, recommended."*

Tel: (07624) 204320 Email: <a href="mailto:Bluejohnmedia@hotmail.co.uk">Bluejohnmedia@hotmail.co.uk</a>									
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**Looking for an unusual present?**  
**Why not give someone the chance to learn an instrument?**  
**As a special offer, available until 1st January 2013,**  
**Mannin Music are offering**

**10% OFF 4 TASTER LESSONS!**

**Lessons are available in piano, voice, violin, viola, flute, electric and acoustic guitar, bass, drums, theory, and also in recording and live sound engineering.**

**For further details**  
**email: [info@manninmusic.com](mailto:info@manninmusic.com)**  
**or phone: 470248**



[www.manninmusic.com](http://www.manninmusic.com) or find us on



# CALENDAR

## December

1st A taste of Christmas (music and food) with Caarijn Coodjagh, Charles Guard and others at St James' Church, Dalby, 7.30pm. Tickets £12.50 from Ginny Doyle 844031

2nd Castletown Met Silver Band at St Barbara's Day Parade/Service, St Thomas' Church, Douglas

7th Bree at St Ninian's Lower School Christmas Fayre (Bemahague), 7pm

7th Music at the Club, Peel Golf Club, 8pm

8th Bree busking in Douglas, Strand Shopping Centre, Douglas, 2-3pm

8th Shenanigans Banned at The Institute, Laxey, bring your own picnic (tickets from Laxey Chemist) 8pm £6

8th Ramsey Choral Christmas Concert 'Rejoice and be Merry', St Paul's Church, Ramsey, 7.30pm (see newsletter for details)

8th & 9th Port St Mary Willow Lantern workshops, Scoill Phurt le Moirrey, 10am-4pm FREE (U12s need to be accompanied)

13th The Mollag Band at The White House, Peel, 8.30pm FREE

16th Caarijn Coodjagh at Malew Church, 6.30pm

16th Perree Bane party and faith supper, Ballasalla Village Hall, 7pm FREE

19th The Mollag Band at The Mitre, Kirk Michael, 8.30pm FREE

26th Hunt the Wren around the Island (Port St Mary, Ramsey, Douglas & St Johns)

27th Mollag Ghennal, various bands and food and merriment, Douglas Masonic Hall, 8pm tickets in advance £12 (tbc)

Please send in dates so that we can publicise events here & online: [www.manxmusic.com](http://www.manxmusic.com)

## January

2nd Iliam Dhone commemorations - Hango Hill, Malew Church and the Viking usually - from 2pm

4th Ny Fennee present Giense Shenn Laa y Nollick, Ramsey Masonic Hall, 7.30pm

5th Michael Players dialect play and oie'll verree, Ebenezer Hall, Kirk Michael, 7.30pm, tickets in advance as it's usually crammed full! (see press for details)

6th Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh (Manx Language Society) Shirveish y Nollick (Xmas service in Manx). Peel Methodist Church, Athol Street, 3pm ALL WELCOME

11th Arrane son Mannin competition, Peel Masonic Hall, 8pm FREE

15th MFDS classes - Manx dancing for beginners - start, Onchan Methodist Church Hall, 7pm (see newsletter for poster with full details)

## ADVANCE NOTICE

THE MANX FOLK AWARDS  
ARE PENCILLED IN FOR  
**18-20 MARCH 2013**

AT DOUGLAS YOUTH  
ARTS CENTRE. MORE  
INFORMATION AND  
SYLLABUS AVAILABLE SOON  
ON THE DEC WIKI

## manx heritage foundation ~ undinys eiraght vannin

For information on Manx music & dance contact:

Manx Music Development Officer **Dr Breesha Maddrell:** [mhfmusic@mhf.org.im](mailto:mhfmusic@mhf.org.im)

Manx Music Specialist **Dr Chloë Woolley:** [manxmusicspecialist@mhf.org.im](mailto:manxmusicspecialist@mhf.org.im)

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

**Call:** Breesha: 01624 695784 or Chloë: 01624 695787  
**or write to:** MHF Music Team, The Stable Building, The University Centre,  
Old Castletown Road, Douglas, Isle of Man IM2 1QB



Written and edited by Breesha Maddrell for the Manx Heritage Foundation  
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