

Rain Doesn't Stop Play on St Stephen's Day!

Despite atrocious weather conditions, a number of hardy souls braved incessant rain to join gatherings across the Island for the traditional Hunt the Wren on St Stephen's Day (Boxing Day).

Although other cultural pursuits may have lapsed over the years, this annual procession of dancers and singers, accompanied by a bush of evergreens and other more colourful decoration, parade through the streets and lanes of some of the main towns and villages of the Island.

In the midst of the bush hangs a small wren, these days not killed specifically for the purpose, but typically a bird who has met a natural death, or a simile.

Those making donations to charity were rewarded with a choice of coloured ribbon, rather than a feather from the recently deceased bird, in the hope of attracting good luck for the following year. They're particularly efficacious in the event of shipwreck. Or witchcraft.

But tradition dictates that it should all be brought to a close by noon, after which a feather (or ribbon) is deemed to be worthless. Why this specific time is thought so important is open for debate amongst scholars and historians, although E. Kermode remarked in his unfinished manuscript, subsequently titled Celtic Customs, that, by this time, the unfortunate bird is almost featherless.

Although the rain persisted throughout the day, it did little to stall the enthusiasm of those heading for the front green at Tynwald Hill in their quest of the local game of Cammag.

Revived in recent years, this annual skirmish involves teams representing both the north and the south of the Island, but has few rules.

It's a game of three halves and a singular focus on a sometimes elusive ball, known as a crick.

A small gathering of spectators looked on as those from the north took a resounding victory; winning 7:1.

The game was followed by a music session at the Tynwald Hill Inn, where everyone could relive the game, discuss technique and seek shelter from the unremitting rain.

In the coming weeks look out for details of a special Cammag Match to be held on the Isle of Man during the International Celtic Congress in 2016.



Woodland Warblers perform Hunt the Wren around Woodlands Close in Douglas

Photo by Dave Kneale (Isle of Man Newspapers). See more pics: www.iomtoday.co.im/news/isle-of-man-news/hunt-the-wren-picture-special-1-7646684#ixzz3wlK4QYlh

Valerie Caine
© December 2015

In this month's edition...

- MFA 2016 syllabus
- Mollag Ghennal pics
- Manx Dance survey
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- Oie'll Verrees in the Past

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Hunt the Wren pics from Ramsey, St Johns, Douglas x 2, Sulby and Port St Mary!!

Photo Credits: Val Caine, George Watson, Dave Kneale (IOM Newspapers), Roy Kennaugh, CW



FIONA MCARDLE: Hunt the Wren in Douglas (Woodbourne) went well in spite of the rain. It wasn't too wet till around 11.30 when it got a bit steadier! A good turnout, especially considering the weather. Laurence Kermode's neighbours were very happy that we kept to tradition in his honour by finishing outside his home. Our musicians brought their whistles out and we sang too. £150 for Douglas Lifeboat.

CAROLINE HELPS from Perree Bane: Despite the foul weather Hunt The Wren went ahead in St Mary's Church Hall. A mixture of traditional Hunt the wren and ceili dances. About 70 people attended. Mannin Aboo! Thanks to The Albert for hosting us afterwards!





Manx folk awards syllabus now out!!

The annual DEC Manx Folk Awards will take place once again from **20 – 23 March 2016** at the Douglas Youth Arts Centre.

The MFA will be also using the Trinity Methodist Church as the number of entrants now exceed the space at the Youth Arts centre!

There are competitions for children aged 4 – 18 in Manx dance, singing, recitation and instrumental classes. The secondary classes will be held on Sunday 20 March at the Youth Arts Centre starting at 1pm. The primary classes are run during the school day 21 – 23 March.

For 2016 there are new classes for claesagh (harp), prash (brass) and feddan vooar (flute) as well as new Manx Gaelic reading classes for all ages.

There are also changes to the choir classes with a set piece for Manx Gaelic song and English with a Manx theme – meaning the children can all have a sing together at the end of the class! The emphasis is always on fun, with children being encouraged to perform with a partner if they don't want to do a solo.

There is a new website where the syllabuses and all entry information can be found <http://manxfolkawards.weebly.com/> Entries close Friday 19 February 2016.

The Manx Folk Awards are organised by the Department of Education and Children, Culture Vannin and Manx National Heritage.



Why not enter "The Guild" too? 22nd-30th April

As in previous years, there are lots of competitions suitable for Manx musicians and dancers (children & adults) in the Manx Music Speech & Dance Festival (AKA The Guild). With classes for Gaelic choir, solo singing in Manx, folk song, country dancing and musical ensemble, there are plenty of opportunities to perform Manx music and dance.

Download the syllabus here: www.manxmusicfestival.org

Where there is own choice option, you could use some Manx music. e.g. sing a Manx folk song, use the Fiddyl, Feddan Mooar, Prash or Claesagh resources in the instrumental solo and ensemble classes, or check out the Cloie! folk group downloads on <https://wiki1.sch.im/wiki/pages/M480d9y/Cloie.html>

***COMPOSITION PRIZE (£50)** A1a –To maintain a link with our cultural heritage, the challenge is to compose a new song for ONE voice with lyrics with Manx content by a 20th or 21st century poet. Competitors may arrange a performance of their piece which will follow the adjudication. All compositions must be submitted with the entry form or on-line by Saturday 6th February 2016. *There is also a class for original poetry or prose composition in Manx dialect.*



The Annual Mollag Ghennal Brightens the Winter Gloom

This year the annual festive gathering returned to Peel with a selection of Manx musicians to whet everyone's appetite on a dismal winter evening. Traditionally held between Christmas and New Year, the night's entertainment was compéred by local man Greg Joughin of the Mollag Band at the Masonic Hall. Predictably the concert was a sell out with a line--up of singers and musicians performing at the venue from across the Island.

Matt Kelly set the ball rolling with some nifty guitar work, and although frequently seen as part of the successful duo Strengyn, this was a solo performance. He was followed by Manx Gaelic vocalist Ruth Keggins, who pops up in a variety of musical combinations, but on this occasion sang in partnership with fellow songstress Sarah Hendy, accompanied by David Kilgallon on keyboard. Hotfoot from the north of the Island was locally based Scottish musician Malcolm Stitt, who regaled the packed venue with a cross-section of material.

After an interval for supper, the evening was brought to a close by the celebrated Mollag Band, providing a wide selection of songs and tunes from their extensive repertoire.

Review by Valerie Caine © January 2016



Photos by Jiri Podobsky



Claasagh Harp Concert

A fantastic Christmas concert by *Claasagh*, Rachel Hair's Manx harp students, raised over £115 for **Manx Cancer Help** in memory of local harpist Leo Phillips, whose wish was that her harps be made available to the young students. Leo's legacy means that all of Rachel's students now have access to a harp to practice on at home. Leo's harps can be identified by little red ladybirds at the top of their soundboards. To find out more about harp lessons: http://manxmusic.com/education_page_92028.html

Tynwald Carol Service

There was a distinctly Manx musical theme throughout the Tynwald Carol Service at St Mary's of the Isle (16 December). Conducted by Jonathan King, the Tynwald Choir performed WH Gill's setting of the TE Brown poem "Three Kings from out the Orient" and Miss ML Wood's "Cold Blows the Wind". The congregation joined the choir for When the Lady Mary gave Christ Birth [Tra va Ruggit Chreest] and "Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning" which was sung to Dr J Clague's tune "Balladoole".

The national anthem was sung to an arrangement for voices, organ and brass ensemble by Jonathan King [available to download] and the service finished with the Tynwald Brass Ensemble performing an arrangement of John Kinley's "Mona's Delight", a piece commissioned by Culture Vannin and performed by Rushen Silver Band at the Lorient Inter-Celtic Festival 2015. The piece includes Eunyssagh Vona, The Tiger and Step Dance. **National Anthem arr J King**— download here: http://manxmusic.com/learn_page_358562.html



A Victorian Christmas at the Grove

Here are John and Cathy Rhodes who taught schoolchildren some old Manx carvals at the Grove Museum in Ramsey. [photo credit: IOM Newspapers]

Full story: www.iomtoday.co.im/news/isle-of-man-news/children-celebrate-a-manx-victorian-christmas-1-7625172

"SHINE STAR SHINE" PREMIERE IN CUMBRIA

Emma Skelton, who hails from the Isle of Man, but now lives in Cumbria, has been in touch to say that her local choir have performed "Shine Star Shine" by Breesha Maddrell and Frank Woolley. The new Christmas song [see KMJ Dec 2015] was performed at a carol service on 6th Dec with the descant vocal

part played on flute. KMJ thinks this was probably the world premiere of Shine Star Star!

It was also performed by St Ninian's School Choir and the Dhoon School at their Christmas carol services in December.

A Taste of Christmas

A Taste of Christmas, held at St James' Church in Dalby, attracted a capacity audience in the run up to the festive season, with a tried and tested formula providing a sparkling programme of entertainment.

Gathered around the schoolroom fire on a windswept, winter evening, amongst an atmosphere of oil lamps, candlelight and rural decoration, it was the perfect setting for the combined talents of the Manx Gaelic choir Caarjyn Coojdjagh, under the direction of Annie Kissack.

Members of the choir sang a selection of unaccompanied carols and Manx carvals, which included a special guest appearance of Charles Guard, who charmed members of the audience with a number of evocative pieces played on the harp.

Other highlights included a poem by Roger McGough set to music by choir member Aalin Clague, which has subsequently been entered for a UK competition, and another poem written and recited by Annie Kissack.

Interspersed amongst the vibrant tunes and thought-provoking poetry, were extracts from the book *The Green Hills by the Sea*, written by Hugh Coleman Davidson and published in 1887.

Supper was provided by their usual onsite team of bakers and cooks, which included Christmas pudding with Brandy Butter and Mince Pies at the close of the evening.

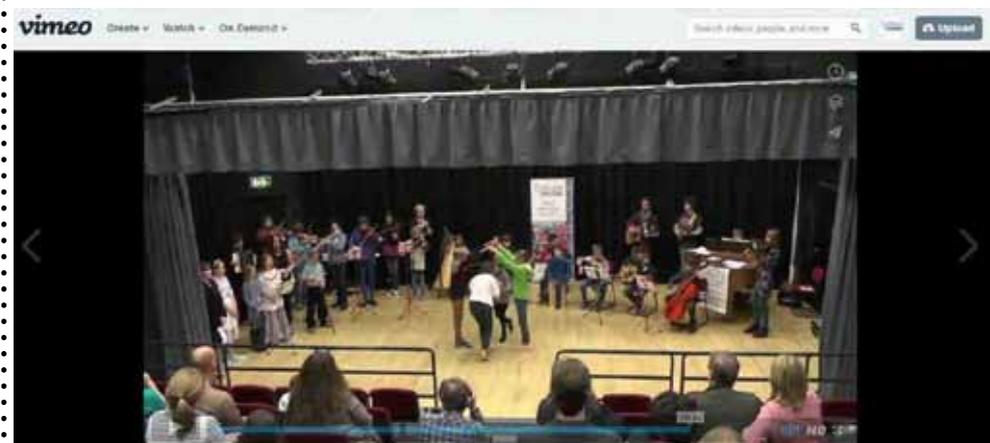
Funds raised on the night will be divided between Dalby Church Restoration Fund, Women's Aid IoM and the Manx overseas charity Mannin Sponsors Africa, who are working to provide wells for villages in Gambia.

For details of future events: www.stjamesdalby.org

Valerie Caine © December 2015

Youtube/video corner

Woohoo, lots of treats for you this month!



Big Bree weekend

Mini films of music, dance and drama performances by the Bree students are now available to view on Culture Vannin's Vimeo page, including this performance of "Creepy Folk Come Down":

<https://vimeo.com/148399448>

[Filmed by Ron Corkish]

A blast from the past!

Here is Manx dance group Ny Fennee performing the Girls' Jig at Lowender Peran in 1991!

Dancers: Caly Roberts, Claire King and Aalish Hannan (and Chloe Woolley waiting in the wings!)

http://cornishmemory.com/item/CHA_03_03

Come to your Senses!

Isle of Man Tourism's latest video features a soundtrack Ruth Keggins singing the haunting Gaelic song

Sea Invocation New Tourism video:

<https://youtu.be/89k-8oEH0mo>

Fantastisch!

Tom, Adam and Luke have just returned from their tour of Germany with Angelo Kelly and family.

Watch them on TV: www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3bgftu01Kc

Harrish y Cheayn - Across the Sea



Euterpe Waltz

Composer Llewellyn Owen wrote this lively waltz in honour of the great ship that took his family from England to live in New Zealand in 1879. The 152 year old ship is now called "The Star of India" and it resides in

San Diego, USA. It was built in Ramsey and the Star of India museum maintains strong ties with the Isle of Man.

LISTEN TO THE WALTZ: <http://sdmaritime.org/wp-content/assets/education/music/13-Euterpe-Waltz.mp3>

SHINING BY THE SEA

On the suggestion of Keith Kerruish, Culture Vannin are producing a songsheet to add to the maritime museum's education programme. Based on a traditional tune collected by WH Gill in the 1890s, "**Ramsey Town**" is also going to be the set song for primary school choirs in the 2016 Manx Folk Awards. [SEE RESEARCH NEWS]

Ramsey Town
WH Gill
More National Songs 1896
Words by E. Crabb

Allegro Moderato $\text{♩} = 128$

1. 'Twas once I loved a lass, I swore I loved her true; And
that I did so long as we held Ram-sey still in view, And
that I did so long as we held Ram-sey still in view.

CHORUS
Ram-sey Town, O Ram-sey Town, Shining by the sea!
Here's a health to my true love, Where-so-e'er she be.

2. Her hair was like the gold, Her eyes, like cloud, were grey;
We sailed away for the blazing South, All on a summer's day.
CHORUS

3. My heart is not so small, To stop at one, good lack!
I'll love 'em all, or twenty such, Grey eyes, or brown, or black!
I'll love 'em all, or twenty such, Grey eyes, or brown, or black!
CHORUS

4. My heart is not so small, To stop at one, good lack!
I'll love 'em all, or twenty such, Grey eyes, or brown, or black!
I'll love 'em all, or twenty such, Grey eyes, or brown, or black!
CHORUS

Produced by Dr. Chris Manning for Culture Vannin © 2015 www.culturevannin.com



Two Manx acts will be making their mark at this year's mighty Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow; Europe's largest annual winter music festival. Mec Lir will be along side the Scott Wood Trio on Saturday 16 Jan at the Oran Mor and Ruth Keggin will be performing with her Inter-Gaelic group Aon Teanga on 17 January at the National Piping Centre.

Cwllwm Celtaidd 2016

Manx dance group Perree Bane [below] will be representing the Island at this popular Welsh Celtic festival from 4-6th March. www.cwllwmceltaidd.org/en/



Arrane son Mannin

Manx concert

New song competition

Masonic Hall, PEEL

Saturday 9th January

7.30pm

Marlene Hendy & Dilys Sowery

Ruth Kegglin & Sarah Hendy

Clogaree Twoale

Bob Carswell (dialect)

and others

Culture VANNIN

Admission free

**Free WI song download
from MRAANE AYNS ARRANE**

"The Song of the Women's Institute", written by Kathleen Faragher and set to the music of C. H. Parry, sung by the Isle of Man Women's Institute Choir, Mraane ayns Arrane ("Women in Song").

The poem by Kathleen Faragher was conceived of as a song to be sung in this way to C. H. Parry's well-known tune. The poem was published in Kathleen Faragher's 1959 book, 'Where Curlews Call.' It was then taken up by the Maughold W.I. and sung at the conclusion of their meetings for a number of years.

This performance of the song appears on the CD, 'Mraane ayns Arrane', released in November 2015. The CD of 16 songs is available at only £10 in various shops across the Isle of Man. Alternatively, a copy can be obtained by contacting Diane Durber on: **ddurbs@manx.net**

<https://soundcloud.com/manxliterature/womens-institute-mraane-ayns-arrane>

CLIOGAREE TWOAIE & GUESTS DAVID KILGALLON, MARLENE HENDY & DILYS SOWREY WILL BE IN CONCERT FOR RAMSEY COMMISSIONERS' 150TH ANNIVERSARY ON FRIDAY 29TH JANUARY, 7.30PM AT ST MARY STAR OF THE SEA AND ST MAUGHOLD CATHOLIC CHURCH, RAMSEY.



Fy Yerrey – the new CD by Manx singers Dilys Sowrey and Marlene Hendy is now for sale for £10 in Chrystals in Ramsey and Port Erin, Shakti Mann and The Snug in Ramsey, Celtic Gold in Peel and The Bridge Bookshop in Port Erin.

Kirk Michael Oie'll Verree - pictured below are members of Ny Fennee performing last night [5th Jan] at this popular annual event. Always a sell-out and a guaranteed good night of entertainment, we'll have more details in the February edition of KMJ. Find out more about trad Oie'll Verrees in the RESEARCH page.



RESEARCH NEWS

PEEPS INTO THE PAST by Syd Boulton

Friday, 6th January, 1961

In the Days of the "Oiel Verreys"

Singing of Christmas "Carvals"

Battle with Dried Peas – In Church

THE season of Christmas is still fresh in our memory and it is fitting that this week's article in our series should deal with the popular Christmas Eve observance of the old days – Yn Oie'l Verrey which in latter times has been extended so that the service is held at odd times in the winter – not related to the season of goodwill at all.

Oie'l Voirrey – to give it the more correct spelling- means the Eve of Mary's Feast. The description which follows is taken from a book "The Christmas Morn Carol Service of Celtic Countries," written by A. Stanley Davies, and which first appeared about 10 years ago...

To read the full article (p. 19, originally published in *The Courier*), plus more fascinating articles about music, customs and entertainment in the Isle of Man: www.manxmusic.com/media/Learn%20Songs/PEEPS%20INTO%20THE%20PAST%20-%20MUSIC%20COMPLETE.pdf



MANX NOSTALGIA

Here's a photo of folk group **Pocheen** performing at a house party in Glen Maye in 1979. Members included Paul Reynolds (left, guitar) and Marlene Hendy (middle, singer) who are both still very busy performing around the Island. *From the Manx Nostalgia Facebook page.*

Research project on Manx dance

Cardiff MA Ethnomusicology student, Esther Chuang, is carrying out an ethnographic project on the relationship

between Manx folk/traditional dance groups and ideas of belonging and Manx identity. She has spent Christmas on the Island interviewing Manx dancers and conducting fieldwork.

She has created a couple of surveys depending and would like your help with her research – please share with your friends.

The surveys will close on 17 January:

<https://surveyplanet.com/567172f135ce55965b02bf0c>
(if you are a member of a Manx Folk Dance Group)

<https://surveyplanet.com/567172f313a9ebb450a12063>
(your Views on Manx Folk Dance Groups if you do not belong to one)

The British Library holds the **Steve Gardham Collection** and here is a 1969 recording of Dorothy Bavey from Hull, singing "Ramsey Town":

http://sounds.bl.uk/World-and-traditional-music/Steve-Gardham-Collection/025M-C1009X0005XX-6800V0#_CONT. <http://sounds.bl.uk/World-and-traditional-music/Steve-Gardham-Collection/025M-C1009X0005XX-6900V0>

Ramsey Town became famous through WH Gill's Manx National Songs (1896) and it has remained a favourite for many. The catchy ditty is also set for this year's Manx Folk Awards KS2 choir competition [English language]: http://manxfolkawards.weebly.com/uploads/6/5/7/8/65789437/ramsey_town_cw_-_full_score.pdf

“KELLY THE BLACKGUARD”

JAMES KELLY OF PATRICK AND THE SALMON LEAP

In a previous piece for *KMJ* (November 2011) looking at the dance informants of Mona Douglas, there was a suggested identification for “Kelly the Blackguard” or “Blaggard” depending as to how you wish to spell it. “Is he the William Kelly, aged 52 years old, single, a Manx speaker, to be found living on Ballachrink, Dalby, and farming a piece of ground there in 1901 or not?” Not is the clear answer as will be explained here. “Kelly the Blackguard” was known to be able to dance the Salmon Leap and he was sought out by Mona for that reason. His name was given to her by W.W. Gill, the author and compiler of the *Manx Scrapbooks* series, but Kelly was not to be an easy man to find as he told her that he was in fact a tramp, “going on the houses” in Manx parlance, and when he was not engaged on that activity, he lived in an uninhabited house on the Glen Rushen Road in Patrick. Gill at one time lived around Dalby and so this is how he came to know of him.

By sheer chance, as is ever the way, when working on another topic I came across in the 1901 Census enumerated at Ballaman in Lonan, one James Kelly, aged “about 50,” born in Rushen and an English speaker. Crucially, he was entered as a Tramp and as occupation “Begging (Sleeping in Barn).” Never wishing to multiply possibilities, this must be the match for “Kelly the Blackguard.” In 1891, Kelly was an unmarried farm labourer at Kilkenny on Clooney’s Road in Braddan. Clearly, at some date after this he gave up working life to tramp around the Island. A James Kelly aged 77 was buried in Rushen on 23 April 1927 and this fits the Kelly of the census.

We know from a typescript description of the Salmon Leap amongst Mona’s personal papers in the MNHL that the dance was not collected from Kelly alone—there was also Thomas Craine, William Caine of Jurby Curragh, and John James Kelly of Baldrine, but “the Leap itself was shown to me in the 1920’s by a man in Patrick known as Kelly the Blackguard.” It can be shown that he is James Kelly of Patrick, and with that yet another of the dancers found by Mona Douglas is now identified, slowly but surely.

By Stephen Miller, Vienna

TRANSCRIPTION OF THE MONTH

see www.manxmusic.com for more printable pieces of Manx music

31st January is **Laa'l Breeshey, St Bridget's Eve**. Traditionally, householders would stand outside their front doors with an armful of rushes, and chant an invitation to St Bridget to come in and bless the household.

The KS2 set choir piece in this year's Manx Folk Awards is the Gaelic song, "Invocation to St Bridget" which was collected by Mona Douglas from Mrs Bridson of Glen Maye. The song asks St Bridget to come into the house that night. This arrangement for junior choir is by Frank Woolley (2005) and you can download the full song and pronunciation help here: <http://manxfolkawards.weebly.com/set-pieces.html>

Invocation to Saint Bridget

Coll. Mona Douglas
from Mrs Bridson
Glen Maye

(Arrane y Ben Thie or Clean Suggane)

Arr. J.F.Woolley

Andante ♩ = 50

The musical score is written for a junior choir and piano accompaniment. It is in the key of B-flat major (two flats) and 6/8 time. The tempo is marked 'Andante' with a quarter note equal to 50 beats per minute. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) features a piano introduction with a dynamic marking of *p* and *mp*. The second system (measures 5-8) includes the first line of lyrics: 'Vreesh - ey, Vreesh - ey, tar gys my hie,' with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The third system (measures 9-12) includes the second line of lyrics: 'tar gys y thie aym nocht. Vreesh - ey, tar o tar' and a note for a second voice: '(Voice 2 opt. in repeat.) Vreesh - ey, tar o tar'. The dynamic marking for this system is *mf*. Pedal markings are present throughout the piano accompaniment, including 'Ped.', 'Ped. simile', and 'Ped.'.

CALENDAR

JANUARY

9th Bree Youth Music Session, YAC 2-3.30pm

9th Arrane son Mannin, Peel Masonic Hall, 7.30pm. FREE

16th Mec Lir at Celtic Connections, Oran Mor, Glasgow, 7.30pm £14

17th Aon Teanga at Celtic Connections, Piping Centre, 7.30pm £13

29th Cliogaree Twoaie and David Kilgallon [organ] in concert, Our Lady Star of the Star and St Maughold Church, 7.30. FREE.

FEBRUARY

13th Bree Session tbc

20th *MFDS Social Evening, Waterloo Methodist Hall, Ramsey, Faith supper, 8pm

MARCH

4th-6th March Cwlwm Celtaidd, Wales

<http://www.cwlwmceltaidd.org>

20th DEC Manx Folk Awards KS3-5, YAC

<http://manxfolkawards.weebly.com/>

21st-23rd DEC Manx Folk Awards KS1&2, Youth Arts Centre & Rosemount Trinity

25th-28th Shennaghys Jiu festival, Ramsey

<http://shennaghysjiu.com/>

31st - 5th April International Celtic Congress,

Empress Hotel <http://celticcongressmannin.com/isle-of-man-2016/>

APRIL

16th *MFDS Social Evening, Methodist Hall, Colby (by Bridge), Faith supper, 8pm

22-30th Manx music festival, Villa Marina
www.manxmusicfestival.org/

MAY

JUNE

18-29th Mananan Festival, Erin Arts Centre

JULY

5th Tynwald Day [and Manx National Week]

9th MFDS Social Evening, St Peters Village Hall, Onchan

13th-17th Yn Chruinnaght, Peel & Ramsey

www.ynchruinnaght.com

* The Manx Folk Dance Society meet every Tuesday (not 2nd Tues in month) at Onchan Methodist Hall from 8pm* For contact details: http://manxmusic.com/performer_128519.html



Rhythm of Bulgaria dance group are also recruiting. Read an article about them in the latest Manx Tails or check out their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Bulgarian-dancing-IOM-366655383514411/?fref=ts>

Please send in dates so that we can publicise events here & online:
www.manxmusic.com

~ SESSIONS ~

TUES 8pm Monthly session at The Mitre, Kirk Michael
WED 8.30pm Session at O'Donnells, Douglas
THURS 8pm Singing session at The Mitre, Ramsey
FRI 8pm Trad session at The Mitre, Ramsey
FRI Session at the Crosby
Last FRI of month 9pm, Kiaull as Gaelg, Albert, Port St Mary
SAT 10pm Manx at The White House, Peel

~ SESSIONS ~

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For information on Manx music & dance contact:
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Call: Chloë: 01624 695787
or write to: Music Team, Culture Vannin, The Stable Building, The University Centre, Old Castletown Road, Douglas, Isle of Man IM2 1QB

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