



# Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society

## Autumn 2016 newsletter

Welcome to our Autumn 2016 newsletter. Enclosed is the programme card for the forthcoming Winter 2016-17 lecture series; this newsletter is intended to give a summary of the activities of the Society during the last six months, and other selected topics of interest to members.

### Excursions

Thanks to our Hon. Excursion Secretary, Pat Newton, we once again enjoyed a very successful and varied series of excursions on- and off- the Island this summer; the only disappointment was when the weather sabotaged the proposed visit to Whitehaven on the Balmoral.

The old, old road to Castletown led via St Michael's Keeill to Cass ny Hawin after which 21 of us headed off to Anglesey – a real “melange” of experiences which if you want to hear more about come to the Presidential address in December.



On return a spring evening when Julian Edwards of Ballakillingan sprung a few surprises of his own in the grounds – not just trees but a Viking boat and carriage of the train variety. The underground archaeology of Barony Hill was revealed by Professor Mark



Noel leading us back down through Maughold to Tony Cain's study of promontory forts as at Gob ny Garvain.

Narradale shielded its water and abbeylands connection to the Grangee under vegetation and rain; but in quick succession we went to Tynwald Fair and then St John's chapel;



followed by an evening stroll on the hottest day of the year to try and beat up some red grouse on Slieu Maggle. Our final summer visit was to Thomas Clarke's St Marks to learn the other side of the curate's tale.

**Tynwald Fair** - thank you to the members who assisted with, and visited, the Society's stall at this year's Tynwald Fair, where visitors from aged 5 to 95 enjoyed our “How well do you know YOUR Island?” activities. We met many members and old friends, and made new ones as well, a number of whom have since joined the Society.



### IoMNHAS Committee

Since the AGM, we have been delighted to welcome two new co-opted members to the Committee – Rob Middleton and Katie Newton. Natural History is still however under-represented, and any member who feels they can contribute in this area is asked to contact the Hon. Secretary via [Secretary@manxantiquarians.com](mailto:Secretary@manxantiquarians.com)

### Marshall Cubbon Bursaries

Every year, the Society offers up to two bursaries of up to £250 each in memory of the late Marshall Cubbon to full-time students who are researching a Manx-related topic at a recognised institution of Higher Education. Applications for the 2017 bursaries will open on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016, more details and the application form can be found on the Society's web site [www.manxantiquarians.com](http://www.manxantiquarians.com)

### Buildings at Risk

The group co-ordinated by the Society has been working to raise awareness of the plight of, and the need to find ways of sustainably conserving, our built heritage. As well as submissions to members of Tynwald, we have organised the series of “Buildings at Risk” features edited by Simon Artymiuk which have appeared fortnightly in the IOM Examiner on subjects as diverse as the Castle Mona, the Sailors' Shelter in Peel, and the Port St Mary Goods Shed; these have been accompanied by articles highlighting problems with building conservation and the (non)implementation of the Government's statutory Building Registration responsibilities. Links to all the features/articles at:

[www.manxantiquarians.com/news\\_story\\_434127.html](http://www.manxantiquarians.com/news_story_434127.html)



We also welcome the work of the Culture Vannin / Manx National Heritage sponsored “Isle of Architecture” project to raise awareness of the importance of our built environment - details at: [www.isleofarchitecture.com](http://www.isleofarchitecture.com)

### Planning

**Ballaughton Manor** – the Society objected to the demolition and redevelopment of the remaining front portion of Ballaughton which was being justified on the grounds of scattered traces of asbestos in the paint. The Inspector concluded that, as the Registration had never been completed by Planning, the demolition couldn't be prevented; although he was clear that the asbestos excuse carried no weight and set no precedent.

**Port St. Mary Railway Station and Goods Shed** – despite pending Registration (mysteriously stalled) an application was made to convert the Station and Goods shed to offices and surround them with car parking. Whilst supporting the principle of sustainable re-use, the Society felt the application in the form it was submitted did not respect the character (and also over-curtailed the passenger facilities). We objected in writing and in person in front of the Planning Committee, and the application was refused. The developer has now taken this to appeal and IoMNHAS will be represented at the Inquiry.

## Awards

### British Association for Local History

The BALH has recognised the long and dedicated service of Frank Cowin RBV FRICS (who has completed three terms as President of IoMNHAS over the last thirty years) by presenting him with a personal Lifetime Achievement award, citing “his expertise and enthusiasm for Island history that has inspired generations”.



### Reih Bleeaney Vanannan

We were delighted that the Culture Vannin 2016 RBV (Manannan's choice) was awarded posthumously to John Kennaugh and Bernard Caine - two true Manx gentlemen whose greatest joy was sharing their love and knowledge of the Island with others (in 2015, the RBV was awarded to our former President, Deemster William Cain CBE, TH).

## Archaeological investigations

**Cranstal** - analysis of the material recovered from the prehistoric forest site excavation in 2014 is nearing completion and results will be published in vol XV of *Isle of Man Studies* next year.

**Milntown** - It had been suggested that the earliest part of the house could have dated from the late 16th century. However, documents have recently come to light which present a completely different, and hitherto unrealised history of the house. Letters from the mid 1700s between the Christian family, who were living in Cumbria at the time and their tenant at Milntown document his request to build a new house near to the site of the old ruined dwelling house at Milntown. In amongst the plans for the proposed new house is one showing the layout of the original house and its farm buildings - it is described as 'close by' where the new house is to be built but frustratingly doesn't give the exact location!

Geophysical surveys (by Prof Mark Noel) and LiDAR analysis (Dave Martin) found hints of sites of possible previous human activity, which were followed up on the ground this summer. Initial exploratory excavations under the auspices of the Milntown Trustees were carried out by Kate Chapman (former President IoMNHAS) and her husband Alistair Cross, with help from IoMNHAS members. Possible garden features were found under the lawn, and a man-made stone wall (below) - no conclusive signs of the old house yet but exciting clues to be followed up, possibly with ground penetrating radar and/or further excavations.



**'Round Mounds'** - over 160 prehistoric Round Mounds have been identified on the island but they have never been studied in a systematic way using state of the art survey and excavation techniques. These sites are key to understanding the development of prehistoric society on the Island over thousands of years, and relationships between communities on the Isle of Man, and people living in different parts of Britain, Ireland and the near Continent in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. Round Mounds appear to have largely been constructed over burials during this time period, but they conceal a wide variety of burial practices.

Starting this summer, a project led by Dr Rachel Crellin (Leicester University) and Dr Chris Fowler (Newcastle University) hopes to shed more light on these enigmatic mounds. As well as using geophysics to look at the mounds and their surrounding context, the team are using laser scanning and ground penetrating radar to try and gain a better understanding of the structure of the mounds, and carrying out a detailed osteo-archaeological assessment of the human remains in the Manx Museum collections.



## History & Heritage Lectures

The first lecture in this winter's series - organised by Dr Catriona Mackie, of the University College of Mann - is in on Wednesday 19 October, from 6pm-7pm in Elmwood House when Edmund Southworth (Director of Manx National Heritage) will be talking on 'Understanding Castle Rushen'. Further details at [www.catrionamackie.net/lectures](http://www.catrionamackie.net/lectures)

## Keeping in touch

- If you haven't already done so, you can join our e-mail list used to keep members informed – details & privacy policy: [www.manxantiquarians.com/page\\_72633.html](http://www.manxantiquarians.com/page_72633.html)
- Visit our FaceBook page (you don't have to be a member of FaceBook to read our page; but if you are member of FaceBook, please "Like" our page and you can be automatically notified when any updates are posted) [www.facebook.com/IsleOfManNaturalHistoryandAntiquarianSociety/](https://www.facebook.com/IsleOfManNaturalHistoryandAntiquarianSociety/)
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